

PAGODAS, POLITIES, PERIOD AND PLACE: A DATA LED  
EXPLORATION OF THE REGIONAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL  
CONTEXT OF LIAO DYNASTY ARCHITECTURE

by

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## **Abstract:**

The Liao dynasty (907-1125) was a dominant force in the political landscape of East Asia for a period of over two centuries. Despite this, when placed within the framework of Chinese history, the Liao polity and its associated architecture are forced to the periphery. This study aims to re-centre the Liao by exploring the pagodas constructed under this polity within a wider regional and chronological framework. To achieve this end, extant pagodas from China, North Korea, South Korea and Japan were recorded together in a database for the first time. The HEAP (Historical East Asian Pagoda) Database logs the date, location and feature set of each pagoda it contains and provides a means to compare Liao examples to those from other polities, places and periods. Through analysis and visualisations of this data, the Liao are identified as a polity that produced unique pagoda designs and a distinct visual style. While Liao pagodas played a major role in the wider design trends of the period, it is the influence they had at a more local level that may be of most significance, potentially making us rethink the way we frame and construct histories of architecture in China and East Asia.

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## **Introduction:**

It was a family holiday in 2005 that introduced me to pagodas. Towering monoliths of the Chinese historical landscape, this form of architecture immediately stood out to me as something new and exciting that I had not previously encountered. Ten years later, it was pagodas brought me back to China, but this time there was a purpose beyond tourism behind my visit. Travelling around north east China, I was attempting to put together a photographic survey of some of the scores of pagodas left to us by the Liao dynasty (907-1125). With locations ranging from mountain slopes and valleys, right through to the centre of bustling cities; and with sizes ranging from eighty metre skyscrapers to statue like edifices just a few metres high, these pagodas provided a constant source of surprise and wonder. The idea of breaking down these captivating, tangible structures into a series of digital data-points seems to do them a disservice – and yet - that is precisely the methodology that has been applied in this study.

To understand why this approach was necessary, Chapter 1 situates the Liao polity within the historical record. In these accounts we find the Liao cast in the role of the ‘other’. Rather than a distinct political unit, we are instead met with a group of ‘northern barbarians’ pitched against a ‘Chinese’ cultured ideal. This positions the Liao polity on the periphery of a world with China as its centre and generates a narrative of the dynasty’s gradual acculturation to a pre-conceived set of ‘Chinese’ values. While it is demonstrated that concepts of ‘China’ in the Liao period are not as concrete as they are often portrayed, it becomes apparent that discussion of both the Liao and the architecture produced under this polity will inevitably return to the idea of

‘sinification’ unless we can find a way to explore the Liao polity outside the context of Chinese history.

Having established the need to place the Liao polity within its wider context, connections are then explored with the other contemporary polities that existed from the tenth through to the twelfth century. In many of these accounts we still frequently find the Liao on the periphery of someone else’s history but, in bringing these accounts together, an image is gradually assembled of the Liao polity not just as a significant political force, but a cultural one as well. If there is one area amongst these cultural connections where the Liao are repeatedly demonstrated to have been a major player, it is in the field of Buddhism.

Perhaps pagodas then, as a Buddhist architectural form that appears throughout East Asia, could provide the means to broaden our perspective on Liao dynasty scholarship.

Unfortunately, the historiographical issues that affect Liao dynasty scholarship in the field of history also carry through into studies of historical architecture. The acculturation narrative is largely continued as Liao pagodas are subsumed within a national typology of Chinese pagoda designs.

In order to challenge this narrative and bring the Liao beyond the borders of Chinese national history, Chapter 2 of this thesis therefore proposes a new methodology: the construction of a database of East Asian pagodas that could allow for both a regional and chronological comparison of pagoda designs. Thus, the HEAP (Historical East Asian Pagoda) Database was created, a repository of extant pagodas from the earliest examples through to the thirteenth century across a survey region that covers China, North Korea, South Korea and Japan.

The HEAP Database records date, location, elevation and visibility data for each of the 557 pagodas it contains. On top of this, sixteen structural features are identified that can be used to compare and contrast pagoda designs across different periods, polities and places. The database has also been programmed with an array of statistical and GIS functions that open up the study of Liao pagodas to a variety of new research directions that were not previously possible. For the first time, Liao pagoda designs could be systematically compared and contrasted with other examples across the East Asian region, allowing us to witness which previous regions and polities may have influenced their designs, as well as the influence that Liao pagodas themselves may have had on this polity's neighbours and successors.

In Chapter 3, the HEAP Database is put to the test. To ground this study in the existing literature, previous statements from academic works featuring Liao pagodas were divided into three distinct categories: those identifying typical features of Liao pagodas; those identifying specific changes in pagoda design that occurred during the Liao period; and those that identify the polities and archetypes most likely to have influenced the design Liao pagodas. Each of these categories was then tested in light of the evidence provided by the HEAP Database to see if the new evidence available as a result of the creation of the database agreed with previous assumptions about Liao pagoda design.

In stark contrast to the acculturation narrative, what we discover from this analysis is a polity that produced pagoda designs that were unique from anything that came before. Liao pagodas were built in a variety of different styles but also brought a level of standardisation that was almost unparalleled within the survey region. One design in particular can now be identified

as the archetypal ‘Liao style’ pagoda and is demonstrated to be unique to the area of the Liao polity.

Pagoda design in the Liao period can also, quite literally, be demonstrated to have reached new heights and many of the key changes that occurred in pagoda design in the eleventh century can be demonstrated to have had significant Liao involvement. We also witness the impact that Liao pagodas had on later designs, both within the Liao’s own administrative districts and beyond the dynasty’s borders.

Despite its geographical scope, the HEAP Database also highlights the importance of the ‘local’ in pagoda design, with the Liao being seen to have established a new localised tradition in the area under their jurisdiction. This is a discovery that has wider implications for the study of Chinese and East Asian architectural history and suggests that future projects may need to rebalance the importance attributed to the period, polity and place of construction in the buildings of this region.

## **Chapter 1 - The Liao in Chinese and East Asian history:**

Here begins our tale. The empire, long divided, must unite; long united,  
must divide.

Luo Guanzhong

*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*<sup>1</sup>

There are many books currently available that offer the reader a ‘history of China’, a continuous narrative of the nation that we now refer to as the People’s Republic of China, PRC, or simply China.<sup>2</sup> Since the turn of the millennium alone, we have had monographs from major academic presses; chronologically organised multi-volume series; translations of Chinese language texts, as well as more public facing works aimed at bringing the subject to

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<sup>1</sup> English translation taken from: 羅貫中 Luo Guanzhong, *Three Kingdoms - Abridged Edition*, Roberts, M (trans) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). p.3.

<sup>2</sup> For monographs from academic presses, see: John K Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006)., Patricia Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Morris Rossabi, *A History of China* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014). The ongoing *Cambridge History of China* (a mammoth project with its first volume on the Sui and Tang Dynasties published in 1979) contains two volumes that are pertinent to this study: Denis Twitchett and Herbert Franke, *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)., and Denis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith, *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 5: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)., as well as the more recent Harvard University Press’ *History of Imperial China* series, of which the relevant volumes for this period are: Dieter Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009)., and Mark. Edward Lewis, *China’s Cosmopolitan Empire: The Tang Dynasty* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009). The first translation of a text from the genre of *Zhongguo Tongshi* (中國通史), or ‘General Histories of China’ was released in 2008, see: 白寿彝 Bai Shouyi, *An Outline History of China* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2008). which was based upon the most recent 2004 edition of the same text: 白寿彝 Bai Shouyi, *General History of China*, 中國通史 (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe (上海人民出版社), 2004). These histories have also all been complemented by more public facing publications such as: John Keay, *China: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 2009). and Gordon Kerr, *A Short History of China* (Harpenden: Oldcastle Books, 2013).

a wider audience. What all these histories have in common, however, is that they provide a history based primarily on the concept of dynastic cycles; a continuous 'Chinese' empire but ruled by a succession of individual dynasties. As one dynasty in this story falls, another will inevitably take its place and claim the mantle of imperial control.<sup>3</sup> For the majority of these accounts, the first half of the tenth century represents a period of disunion - a disruption to the dynastic cycle after the centralised administration of the Tang dynasty (618-907) broke down and finally ended in 907.<sup>4</sup>

The next fifty years would become known as the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960) period as it witnessed a succession of short-lived dynasties in the north alongside ten individual polities mainly based in the south of what is now China. None of these dynasties could reportedly gain a foothold, as the previous century and a half of Tang imperial breakdown had left little political apparatus or centralised administration for a new dynasty to take full control.<sup>5</sup> In quick succession, the dynasties of the Later Liang (907-923), Later Tang (923-936), Later Jin (936-947), Later Han (947-951) and Later Zhou (951-960), came and went before the country was finally reunited under the Song dynasty (960-1279).<sup>6</sup> Within accounts of China, the Song have been noted as representing not only a reunification, but also a more modern age. From the ashes of the Tang emerged a new age of enlightenment,

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<sup>3</sup> At least until the twentieth century and the first nationalist government of 1911. Although some have argued that the Republic of China (1911-1949(-present in Taiwan)) and Peoples Republic of China (1949-present) are merely continuations of this cyclical tradition - for a popular example of this argument, see: Keay, *China: A History*. p.21.

<sup>4</sup> This is explicitly stated in both Fairbank and Goldman, *China: A New History*. p.86., Rossabi, *A History of China*. p.173. and Twitchett and Smith, *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 5: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors*. p.2. However, Vol. 6 of the same series does acknowledge the potential northern continuity during the period under the Liao Dynasty which began in 907: Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368.*, Chapter 1.

<sup>5</sup> A hypothesis shared by the majority of these texts, see for example: Fairbank and Goldman, *China: A New History*. p.86. as well as Rossabi, *A History of China*. p.173. and Bai Shouyi, *An Outline History of China*. p.231.

<sup>6</sup> Fairbank and Goldman, *China: A New History*. p.86. and Rossabi, *A History of China*. p.173..

sometimes even described as a ‘Chinese renaissance’.<sup>7</sup> Most of all though, the Song represented another key step on the journey towards the China of today, another episode in this nation’s long history...

The above is certainly a convenient narrative and one that makes a lot of sense when trying to compose a history of ‘China’, as it helps to chart a simple and direct course through history. A simple narrative though, is not always an unproblematic one. Putting aside for the moment questions of teleology and nationalism (both of which we shall come to later), this narrative is flawed on a more basic level within its own internal logic. This is because, alongside the Later Liang, there was another dynasty that can be traced back to the year 907. This dynasty was also formed within the borders of what we know today as China and was recognised within the canon of twenty-four official Chinese dynasties, having been granted its own dynastic history by its successors.<sup>8</sup> Coinciding neatly with the fall of the Tang, this dynasty existed not only throughout the entire Five Dynasties period but also continued to be a major political player within the East Asian region until its eventual end some two centuries later in 1125.<sup>9</sup> This dynasty is the Liao and it will be the focus of this study.

The Liao polity claimed jurisdiction over an area that would now encompass the provinces of Inner Mongolia, Liaoning, Jilin and Beijing, as well as parts of Heilongjiang, Hebei, Shanxi,

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted from both: Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China*. p.1. and Lewis, *China’s Cosmopolitan Empire: The Tang Dynasty*. p.2.

<sup>8</sup> The *Liaoshi* 遼史, or ‘History of the Liao’ was created under Yuan Dynasty patronage in the fourteenth century and will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter. It is available in partial translation in: Karl A Wittfogel and Chia-sheng Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 36 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1946). and the original text can be found in: Toqtoa , 脫脫, *Liaoshi*, 遼史 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju (中华书局), 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.147. claim that the Liao remained a stable political force until at least 1112.

Shaanxi, Gansu and Xinjiang. It would also have spread beyond the borders of present day China into south-eastern Russia, Mongolia and possibly North Korea (Fig. 1.1).<sup>10</sup> Among their achievements, the Liao dynasty created two unique scripts that remained in use long after the dynasty's own demise.<sup>11</sup> The Liao were also the first dynasty to use the city now known as Beijing as an imperial capital, as well as instituting an administrative system that was borrowed from until the end of the Qing (1644-1911).<sup>12</sup>

This is a dynasty whose patronage of Buddhism led to art and architecture that has been claimed to represent 'the highest capabilities of East Asia at the time'.<sup>13</sup> These included the creation of the most complete and accurate Buddhist canon East Asia had yet witnessed as well as the region's tallest extant wooden building: a pagoda that has withstood not just the test of time, but also earthquakes up to a magnitude of 6.9 on the Richter Scale.<sup>14</sup> Collections of Liao artefacts have delighted audiences on the international stage, with special exhibitions held in London (1990), Los Angeles (1994), New York (2006), Taipei (2010) and Tokyo

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<sup>10</sup> Valerie Hansen and François Louis, "Introduction, Part 1: Evolving Approaches to the Study of the Liao," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 43, no. 1 (2013): 1–9. p.1.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel. Kane, *The Kitan Language and Script* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). p.ix.

<sup>12</sup> For more on the founding of Beijing, or Yanjing as it was then known see: Nancy Steinhardt, *Chinese Imperial City Planning* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1991). p.123. As for the borrowing of Liao administrative systems, it has even been claimed that the 'one country, two systems' policy practised by the Chinese government today in areas such as Hong Kong can trace its origins back to the Liao dual administration system: Jake Hooker, "Dynasty of Nomads," *Archaeology* 60, no. 6 (2007): 28–35. p.30.

<sup>13</sup> Nancy Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997). p.7.

<sup>14</sup> For more on the pagoda and its construction see: F Lam and M He, "Example of Traditional Tall Timber Buildings in China – the Yingxian Pagoda," *Structural Engineering International* 2 (2008): 3–6. p.3. The assessment of the Buddhist canon came from Sugi, the compiler of the second Koryō canon in the thirteenth century, for more see: Robert E Buswell, "Sugi's 'Collation Notes' to the Koryō Buddhist Canon and Their Significance for Buddhist Textual Criticism," *The Journal of Korean Studies* 9, no. 1 (2004): 129–84. p.130.



(2011).<sup>15</sup> The ethnicity of the Liao dynasty's rulers, the Kitan, even provided the name by which China was known in the west for hundreds of years: Cathay.<sup>16</sup>

Yet somehow, the Liao is a dynasty that is remarkable mainly for its absence within the Chinese national narrative. Even when featured in our 'histories of China', the Liao remain pushed to the fringes. In these accounts, they are a peripheral power variously labelled as: a conquest dynasty, a barbarian dynasty, a nomadic dynasty, and perhaps most importantly – a non-Chinese dynasty.<sup>17</sup> In this chapter we will explore the Liao's political timeline and attempt to ascertain why the dynasty has been side-lined within the Chinese historical narrative.

## 1.1. Who were the Liao?

The following overview of the Liao is by no means comprehensive or representative of all the debates about the history and historiography of the dynasty but is aimed at providing an

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<sup>15</sup> Each of these exhibitions came accompanied with published catalogue, see: Christian Deydier, ed., *Imperial Gold from Ancient China* (London: Oriental Bronzes Ltd, 1990)., Adam Kessler, ed., *Empires Beyond the Great Wall* (Los Angeles: Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, 1994). Hsueh-man Shen, ed., *Gilded Splendour: Treasures of China's Liao Empire (907-1125)* (New York: Asia Society, 2006)., La Ta and Kungshin Chou, eds., *Gold and Glory: The Wonders of Khitan from the Inner Mongolia Museum Collection* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 2010). Takeda Kazuya, ed., *The Splendor of the Khitan Dynasty (草原の王朝契丹)* (Fukuoka: Nishinihon shinbunsha, 2011).,

<sup>16</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.44. Note that 'Cathay' is the English derivative of the more commonly used 'Khitay' and equivalents some of which are still used to this day. For more details on the different forms of Cathay and their use see: Elina-qian Xu, "Historical Development of the Pre-Dynastic Khitan" (University of Helsinki, 2005). p.1-3.

<sup>17</sup> Examples of each of these terms can be found respectively in: Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*., F. W. Mote, *Imperial China: 900-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999)., Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)., and Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China*. An initial counter to the use of this terminology can be found in: Naomi Standen, "Alien Regimes and Mental States," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40, no. 1 (1997): 73–89.

overview of the general consensus that has been reached since the publication of Wittfogel and Feng's seminal work on the dynasty in 1946.<sup>18</sup> Alongside this particular work, this section follows the chronology set out in the Liao section of Volume VI of the *Cambridge History of China* and draws on the 2013 special issue on the Liao of the *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* to try and give an impression of the international understanding of the field as it stands today.<sup>19</sup>

As Valerie Hansen has noted, the word 'Liao' (遼) can refer to a variety of things including: 'the dynasty, the state and the culture' of the Liao polity.<sup>20</sup> As a result, it is important to express at this early juncture how the term will be used within this thesis. Unless otherwise stated, when the term 'Liao' is used it will be to refer to the Liao as a political entity and no ethnic connotation is implied. Equally, when the term 'Kitan' is used, it will be to refer to the Kitan ethnic group rather than the Liao polity. The term 'Liao polity' is also frequently used here not only as an identifier of a political unit but also as a geographical identifier to express the districts and regions that were claimed by this political unit. When the term 'Liao dynasty' is applied, this has been used to refer to the imperial house rather than the polity as a whole (except in cases of direct quotation of, or reference to, previous academic literature). Finally, the term 'Liao pagoda' is used to refer to any pagoda that was constructed within the

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<sup>18</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. This text comes in the form of an annotated version of the *Liaoshi*, for the original Chinese text, see: Toqto'a, 脫脫, *Liaoshi*.

<sup>19</sup> For more on the scope and purpose of this special issue, the introduction can be found in: Hansen and Louis, "Introduction, Part 1: Evolving Approaches to the Study of the Liao." For the Cambridge History, see: Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. Other chronological accounts that specifically focus on the Liao dynasty can be found in: 舒焚 Shu Fen, *A History of Liao, 遼史稿* (Wuhan: Hubei Renmin Chubanshe (湖北人民出版社), 1984). and Pierre Marsone, *La Steppe et L'Empire: La Formation de La Dynastie Khitan (Liao)* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Hansen and Louis, "Introduction, Part 1: Evolving Approaches to the Study of the Liao." p.3.

period and geographical area associated with the Liao polity with no implication that the building was a direct product of the Liao imperial house unless otherwise stated.

Clarity on this is important as in the majority of previous academic works, the term ‘Liao’ is most closely associated with the ethnicity ascribed to the emperors of the dynasty and much of the elite stratum of Liao society – the Kitan.<sup>21</sup> Standen has even noted that the two terms are often used interchangeably in the secondary literature.<sup>22</sup> When discussing the Liao dynasty then, one must first decide who it is we are referring to when we use the term ‘Kitan’.<sup>23</sup> Before the formation of the Liao dynasty, the Kitan are normally referred to as a ‘semi-nomadic’ group, implying that they relied on a mixed economy of pastoralism and limited agriculture.<sup>24</sup> The Kitan were reportedly organised into a federation of eight clans or tribes, under the leadership of the Yaolien and, later, the Yelü clan. Leaders were ostensibly chosen on merit from within these clans making the Kitan, perhaps, unlikely candidates for creating a dynastic succession that would last over two centuries.<sup>25</sup> Noted for both their horses and horsemanship, the pre-dynastic Kitan had no written language, so the majority of

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<sup>21</sup> See for example: Fairbank and Goldman, *China: A New History*. p.113. also: Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.3. Nicola Di Cosmo, “Liao History and Society,” in *Gilded Splendor: Treasures of China’s Liao Empire (907-1125)*, ed. Hsueh-man Shen (New York: Asia Society, 2006), 15–25. p.15.

<sup>22</sup> Naomi Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty: Frontier Crossings in Liao China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007). p.11.

<sup>23</sup> Note that Kitan is also frequently written as both Khitan and Qidan (a Pinyin romanisation of the Chinese name). I use Kitan here as there is now a general consensus that it best represents the original Altaic orthography. For more details on the translation of ‘Kitan’, see: Hansen and Louis, “Introduction, Part 1: Evolving Approaches to the Study of the Liao.” p.3., Kane, *The Kitan Language and Script*. p.4, and David Curtis Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China: Sung’s Foreign Relations with Kitan Liao* (Leiden: Brill, 2005). p.20.

<sup>24</sup> Examples of this terminology are found in: Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.2., Fairbank and Goldman, *China: A New History*. p.113., Rossabi, *A History of China*. p.190.

<sup>25</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.51.

our historical knowledge comes from Chinese language sources, primarily those written under the Tang (618-907).<sup>26</sup>

As a group, the Kitan are believed to have originated and developed around the upper course of the Liao river, in the basin of the modern Shira Muren and Laoha rivers.<sup>27</sup> This is reflected in the Kitan's own origin myth in which Qishou Khan, the primogenitor of the Kitan people, floated on a white horse down the Laoha river and met a daughter of Heaven travelling up the Shira Muren. The result of their union was eight sons, the descendants of whom supposedly comprised the eight tribes of the Kitan.<sup>28</sup> There is no date provided for this mythical foundation but the Kitan first appear as a distinct group in our surviving Chinese language sources in the *Weishu*, the history of the Northern Wei dynasty (386-534) produced in 554.<sup>29</sup> In this account, the Kitan are identified in 388 as an offshoot of the Xianbei.<sup>30</sup> By the seventh and eighth centuries, the Kitan were already involved in the politics of a wider East Asian region, falling into the political orbits of two major powers: the Tang dynasty and the Uighur Empire.<sup>31</sup> As the relative influence of these two polities waned over the course of the ninth and tenth centuries, Kitan influence in Northeast Asia began to grow.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> For more on our written sources for the Kitan during this period, there is an overview in: Xu, "Historical Development of the Pre-Dynastic Khitan." Chapter 2, pp.19-83.

<sup>27</sup> Xu, p.1., Shu Fen, *A History of Liao*. p.2-3.

<sup>28</sup> Hu Lin, "Perceptions of Liao Urban Landscapes: Political Practices and Nomadic Empires," *Archaeological Dialogues* 18, no. 2 (2011): 223-43. p.228.

<sup>29</sup> Xu, "Historical Development of the Pre-Dynastic Khitan." p.93. For the original text, see: 魏收 Wei Shou, *Weishu*, (緯書) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju (中华书局), 1973). 103. 2305

<sup>30</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.44-46

<sup>31</sup> For a full account of this period, see: Xu, "Historical Development of the Pre-Dynastic Khitan.", Chapter 7 and Marsone, *La Steppe et L'Empire: La Formation de La Dynastie Khitan (Liao)*. Chapter 3, pp.69-96. The relationship with the Tang is explored in: Shu Fen, *A History of Liao*. pp.26-32.

<sup>32</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.52.

The person identified as the key figure in this growth was known as Abaoji (872-926). A member of the Yila clan, Abaoji was not technically eligible for taking the role of kaghan - the leader of the Kitan people - as this role was still exclusively available to the Yaolian clan.<sup>33</sup> Despite this, Abaoji's paternal uncle already held the second most important position under that of kaghan, a role that incorporated command of all the Kitan military forces. Thanks to these family connections and a successful military career in his early life, Abaoji soon became leader of the Yila clan and in 903, at the age of thirty-one, took over from his uncle as *yuyue* - commander in chief of the Kitan military forces. Due to his many military successes, Abaoji then took over from the current Yaolian incumbent in 907 as leader of all the Kitan, eventually instigating a form of primogeniture that could be better understood within the confines of the historical conception of a 'Chinese dynasty'.<sup>34</sup> This is, ostensibly, where the story of the Liao as a dynasty begins, although things are not actually quite this clear cut.

As Twitchett states: a precise chronology of the Liao prior to 930 is almost impossible to establish and the dates given are contradicted amongst our various sources and even within individual sources themselves.<sup>35</sup> Abaoji's election to kaghan for example has been assigned to a variety of years between 904 and 922, with the date of 907 given in the *Liaoshi* (遼史, History of the Liao) perhaps chosen to deliberately coincide with the fall of the Tang to create a sense of continuity.<sup>36</sup> Twitchett concludes that the most likely series of events is that Abaoji

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<sup>33</sup> Xu, "Historical Development of the Pre-Dynastic Khitan." p.117.

<sup>34</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.61.

<sup>35</sup> Twitchett and Franke. p.60. A chronological account of these foundational decades of the Liao dynasty can, however, be found in: Marsone, *La Steppe et L'Empire: La Formation de La Dynastie Khitan (Liao)*. Chapter 4, pp.97-163

<sup>36</sup> Valerie Hansen, "International Gifting and the Khitan World, 907-1125," in *Perspectives on the Liao*, vol. 43 (New Haven: Bard Graduate Centre, 2010), 273-302. p.276. The *Liaoshi* is covered in detail later in this chapter, see: Toqtoa, 脫脫, *Liaoshi*.

became the leader of the Kitan in 907 but then, instead of presenting himself for re-election in 916, he carried out a formal ceremony of accession and provided himself the reign title of an emperor, thus creating the beginning of his own imperial house.<sup>37</sup> When the title of Liao was adopted and applied to this fledgling dynasty though, remains a matter of serious contention.

There is no mention in the *Liaoshi* of Abaoji choosing the ‘Liao’ dynastic title during his accession ceremony in 916, with the adoption of the title being attributed to three separate dates of 926, 937 and 938 in our various sources.<sup>38</sup> The choice of ‘Liao’ as a dynastic title also remains a mystery, with Kane stating that the most likely explanation being that it is derived from the Liao river, central to the Kitan creation myth above.<sup>39</sup> This matter is further complicated by the fact that, even after its adoption, the term Liao was not used exclusively to describe the Liao polity throughout its existence. Prior to the adoption of the ‘Liao’ title, the *Liaoshi* refers to the polity as the *Da qidanguo* (大契丹國), commonly translated as ‘Great Kitan State’ until 938 (with *Da liaoguo* (大遼國) or ‘Great Liao State’, after the adoption of the ‘Liao’ title in 938). The *Liaoshi* also informs us that *Da qidanguo* was readopted in 983 before switching back once again to *Da liaoguo* in 1066.<sup>40</sup> Although we will return to these classifiers later, for the purposes of this initial outline, I will continue to follow

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<sup>37</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. 60. Abaoji’s reign title was 神冊, *shence*. See also: Pierre Marsone, “La Dynastie Khitan (Liao): Une Double Identite,” *Etudes Chinoises* 23 (2004): 123–40. p.125

<sup>38</sup> Daniel. Kane, “The Great Central Liao Khitan State,” in *Perspectives on the Liao*, vol. 43 (New Haven: Bard Graduate Centre, 2010), 27–50. p.27. and Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*.p.60.

<sup>39</sup> Kane, “The Great Central Liao Khitan State.” p.29. The alternative as explored in Kane’s work, as well as that of Liu Pujiang and briefly in Rossabi’s *New History of China*, is that initially Liao just referred to the sixteen prefectures that the Liao annexed in 938 with the rest of the Kitan polity being referred to as the ‘Great Kitan’ (or *Da Qidan* 大契丹 in our Chinese sources).

<sup>40</sup> For a chronology of these changes within the *Liaoshi* see: Kane. p.5. For a more detailed account of the naming of the Liao dynasty and some observations of what the polity may have been referred to in the Khitan language see also: Kane, *The Kitan Language and Script*. pp.11-12.

the example of Wittfogel and Feng and refer to the dynasty/polity as ‘Liao’ for expediency, regardless of period.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the confusion surrounding the precise dates of many of the events, the first half of the tenth century represented a massive expansion of the Liao polity. In 918 Abaoji began work on the first of what would become five imperial capitals.<sup>42</sup> Lin informs us that between 902 and 938, a total of twenty-four cities were established by the Liao in an unprecedented level of building in the area.<sup>43</sup> The year 918 also witnessed the adoption of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism as recognised and supported religions within the Liao polity and the construction of the first Confucian temple at the newly established capital.<sup>44</sup> Although Chinese remained the *lingua franca* for written political discourse with other polities, Abaoji commissioned two new Kitan scripts, now known as the Kitan large script (adopted in 920) and the Kitan small script (adopted in 925).<sup>45</sup> There was military and territorial expansion as well, the most significant of which being the conquest of Balhae in 926, bringing a large sedentary population and their cities under Liao influence and control.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.50.

<sup>42</sup> Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.6. The other capitals and the dates they were established were Dongjing (919), Nanjing (947), Zhongjing (1007) and Xijing (1044).

<sup>43</sup> Lin, “Perceptions of Liao Urban Landscapes: Political Practices and Nomadic Empires.” p.73. Although it must be noted here that recent archaeological work carried out as part of the *Understanding Cities* project is challenging the level of pre-Liao occupation at some of these sites.

<sup>44</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.63.

<sup>45</sup> These will both be covered later in the chapter, for a brief introduction, refer to: Daniel Kane, “Introduction, Part 2: An Update on Deciphering the Kitan Language and Scripts,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 43, no. 1 (2013): 11–25.

<sup>46</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.66. For an article on the historiography of Balhae and a brief overview of the events leading up to the polity’s fall to the Liao see also: Jesse D Sloane, “Parhae in Historiography and Archaeology: International Debate and Prospects for Resolution,” *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 27, no. 1 (2014): 1–35. Also, note that Balhae is often referred to using the Pinyin Romanisation: Bohai (渤海) or sometimes ‘Parhae’ based on Korean pronunciation.

During this period the Liao also became increasingly involved in the politics of their southern neighbours and appear not just as a player in their own histories but also those of the Five Dynasties.<sup>47</sup> Abaoji's eventual successor, Deguang, used his military forces to play kingmaker in the transition between the Later Tang (923-936) and Later Jin (936-947), aiding the eventual Later Jin emperor Shi Jingtang in his rebellion against the Later Tang and helping him install himself as emperor of his own dynasty.<sup>48</sup> This resulted in not only a political ally, but also significant annual payments to the Liao with the *Xin wudaishi* stating that there was a: 'yearly tribute of 300,000 bolts of silk, and in addition precious jade and other exotic rarities, including all kinds of foods from China. Not a day went by when emissaries would not pass each other on their way'.<sup>49</sup> These close ties were embedded in familial terminology with Shi Jingtang referring to Deguang as his 'father' in official correspondence, acknowledging that Deguang - and by extension the Liao - were the senior party in this political relationship.

Alongside these political and financial gains, the Liao also negotiated with the Later Jin to receive an administrative district known as the Sixteen Prefectures in 937: an area that held strategic advantage for controlling the passes into Liao lands and also a sizeable population with multiple urban settlements. Although they only made up a small portion of the geographical area claimed by the Liao, the Sixteen Prefectures have been noted for providing

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<sup>47</sup> Primarily the *Jiu wudaishi* (舊五代史), or 'Old History of the Five Dynasties', as opposed to Ouyang Xiu's *Xin wudaishi* (新五代史), or 'New History of the Five Dynasties' where they are relegated to the appendices. The reasoning behind this will be covered when we discuss these sources but for more information refer to Naomi Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources," *Asia Major* 24, no. 2 (2011): 147-98. p.170-173. For the original texts, see: 薛居正 Xue Juzheng, *Jiu Wudaishi*, 舊五代史 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju (中华书局), 1977). and 歐陽修 Ouyang Xiu, *Xin Wudaishi*, 新五代史 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju (中华书局), 1974).

<sup>48</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.70.

<sup>49</sup> Ouyang Xiu, *Xin Wudaishi*. 72.894. translation quoted from François Louis, "Shaping Symbols of Privilege: Precious Metals and the Early Liao Aristocracy," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 33 (2003): 71-109. p.87.



a disproportionate amount of the polity's wealth and population.<sup>50</sup> With both Balhae and the Sixteen Prefectures incorporated into the Liao polity, the Kitan clans that started the dynasty soon became a numerical minority in a population estimated at over four million people.<sup>51</sup> In adopting not only the former populations of Balhae and the Sixteen Prefectures (themselves not comprised of any single ethnicity), but also a multi-ethnic blend that Di Cosmo lists as including: Mongols, Tungus, Chinese, Korean, Xi, Shiwei, Zubu, Balhae, Uighur and Chinese, the Liao polity became a cosmopolitan exercise that could no longer be reflected in just the term 'Kitan'.<sup>52</sup> Lin has observed that it is highly unlikely that any Liao cities were populated by just a single ethnicity with certain groups being transferred (sometimes forcibly) between urban locations, often to make up for population shortfalls in the steppe.<sup>53</sup> These various groups provided a skilled labour force, with Kuhn stating that the Liao political class highly valued the artisans of their newly annexed territories, employing craftsmen such as carpenters, joiners, metalworkers, shipbuilders and weavers to work on imperial projects.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> See for example: Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China: Sung's Foreign Relations with Kitan Liao*. p.5., Michal Biran, "Kitan Migrations in Eurasia (10th – 14th Centuries)," *Journal of Central Eurasian Studies* 3 (2012): 85–108. p.86.

<sup>51</sup> It is also noted in Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*., that the Kitan can have made up no more than a quarter of the overall Liao population. They also suggest that population estimates for the period are an inexact science with no precise census data available. Population estimates for the Liao have therefore varied massively with Mote stating that the ethnically 'Chinese' population of the Liao alone stood at over five million people: Mote, *Imperial China: 900-1800*. p.77.

<sup>52</sup> Di Cosmo, "Liao History and Society." p.20. A similar list can be found in: Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.20. Please note that ethnicity is something that will be explored later in this chapter but suffice to say that all of these 'ethnicities' listed here are in no way fixed, identifiable and essential entities and that there existed blurred lines between many of these groups.

In a separate point, Tan has noted that this Liao cosmopolitanism and the diverse ethnic makeup of the polity may have contributed to our inability to fully translate the Kitan script due to 'strata upon strata of words acquired through inter-borrowing': Wayne Wei-yu Tan, "Filling in the Blanks: Sources and Methods in Deciphering the Khitan Scripts," in *Perspectives on the Liao* (New Haven: Bard Graduate Centre, 2010). p.33.

<sup>53</sup> Lin, "Perceptions of Liao Urban Landscapes: Political Practices and Nomadic Empires." p.236. Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.539., also note that the *Liaoshi* records Balhae populations being used to inhabit new Liao cities in previously unoccupied areas of the steppe.

<sup>54</sup> Dieter Kuhn, "'Liao Architecture': Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?," *T'oung Pao* 86, no. 4/5 (2000): 325–62. p.339.

It is believed that to cope with the disparity in both the population and economies between the north and south of the Liao polity, the dynasty formed a dual administration system – employing different administrative and legal structures for the management of the population in each region.<sup>55</sup> Officials for the southern regions were drawn largely from Balhae and the Sixteen Prefectures, individuals allegedly more versed in the administration and taxation of heavily agrarian and densely populated areas.<sup>56</sup> The northern administration meanwhile remained largely the domain of the Kitan.<sup>57</sup> Alongside this interior re-organisation, the Liao also remained involved in the politics of their southern neighbours, receiving envoys of the Later Jin dynasty, as well as representatives from other states included amongst the ‘Ten Kingdoms’ (and therefore a part of the Chinese national narrative) such as Wuyue and the Southern Tang.<sup>58</sup>

By 960, the year the Song dynasty is seen to have taken over from the Five Dynasties in the traditional dynastic succession of Chinese history, the Liao clearly already represented a well-established and organised polity with its own functional administration and political connections. The final of the Five Dynasties however, the Later Zhou, had also already

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<sup>55</sup> This concept of a ‘dual administration’ can be witnessed in: Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. pp.41-57 and has been discussed in relation to evidence from Liao period stone inscriptions in: Ruowei Yang, “The Liao-Dynasty Stone Inscriptions and Their Importance to the Study of Liao History,” *East Asian Library Journal* 6, no. 2 (1993): 55–72.

<sup>56</sup> For the Sixteen Prefectures see: Thomas J Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989). p.14., Di Cosmo, “Liao History and Society.” p.21., amongst others, and for Balhae see: Remco E Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170* (Leiden: Brill, 2010). p.211. and Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.50. More recently, the idea that the Southern administration would always have been run by southern individuals has been challenged, see: Pamela Kyle Crossley, “Outside In: Power, Identity, and the Han Lineage of Jizhou,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 43, no. 1 (2013): 51–89. p.68.

<sup>57</sup> Rossabi, *A History of China*. p.190.

<sup>58</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.72. It should be noted though that, after the death of Shi Jingtang, the Liao relationship with the Later Jin did break down leading to war and the eventual Liao conquest of Kaifeng in 947. This only lasted for five months however, with the Liao polity quickly retuning to its previous geographical extent. It could be argued here that the Liao were therefore, at least indirectly, responsible for the creation of the fourth of the Five Dynasties, the Later Han, as Liu Zhiyuan founded the dynasty in 947 taking Kaifeng after the Liao forces had left the city.

succeeded in bringing many of the southern regions that would have made up the Tang polity under their nominal control. When the Song dynasty took over from the Later Zhou in a military coup, they inherited this political position; putting them into direct contact, and possible competition, with their more established northern neighbours, the Liao.<sup>59</sup> Both Liao and Song proclaimed themselves as universal powers, making conflict of some description between the two almost inevitable.<sup>60</sup>

In 963 the Song attacked the Northern Han, a kingdom established by the remnants of the fourth of the Five Dynasties, the Later Han, and whose administrative districts fell between those of Liao and Song.<sup>61</sup> The Northern Han appealed for Liao aid and troops were sent in 964 to help repel the Song invasion.<sup>62</sup> With the situation at a stalemate, the Liao and Song established regular diplomatic missions from 975 but still fell into conflict again over the Northern Han in 976 and 979. This final campaign led to heavy Liao defeats and the conquest of the Northern Han by Song forces creating a huge border region between the two polities, now with no intermediaries between them. Trying to press his advantage, the Song emperor, Zhao Kuangyi, attempted to push on and take the Sixteen Prefectures from the Liao but his campaign ended in a rout after a major Liao victory in open battle at the Gaoliang river.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Twitchett and Franke, p.83.

<sup>60</sup> Each of the Five Dynasties had also claimed that they possessed the 'Mandate of Heaven' for universal rule but, with the possible exception of the short-lived Later Zhou Dynasty, the Song were the first to provide legitimate competition to the Liao in terms of regional hegemony, see: Peter Lorge, "The Great Ditch of China and the Song-Liao Border," in *Battlefronts Real and Imagined: War, Border and Identity in the Chinese Middle Period*, ed. Don J Wyatt (New York: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2008), 59–74. p.61.

<sup>61</sup> Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China: Sung's Foreign Relations with Kitan Liao*, p.2.

<sup>62</sup> There were also minor direct skirmishes between Liao and Song in their own border region concurrently with these events with examples recorded in the *Liaoshi* in 963 and 967, see: Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*, p.84. and Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*, p.530.

<sup>63</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*, p.86

Further military encounters between the two powers occurred in 986, 1001, 1003 and 1004. Most accounts appear to agree that the Liao had the upper hand in these campaigns and even before the major Liao invasion into Song territory in 1004, the Song had been trying to negotiate some form of peace settlement. With the campaign already underway though, and the Liao no more than a hundred kilometres from the Song capital of Kaifeng, the Liao used this favourable military position as leverage in these peace talks.<sup>64</sup> The negotiations came to a conclusion with the treaty of Chanyuan, when the two polities exchanged oath letters agreeing to the terms of peace: the Song would make an annual payment of silk and silver to the Liao and there would be an officially demarcated border between the two with no unauthorised crossing.<sup>65</sup> Like the Liao's previous arrangement with the Later Jin, the emperors of the two dynasties would also refer to each other in familial terms. Unlike this agreement, however, these familial relationships did not identify either party as senior to the other with the terminology instead based on the actual age of emperors.<sup>66</sup>

With neither dynasty likely to be capable of permanently upsetting the status quo in their favour, the peace held and regular diplomatic missions were sent between the two polities.<sup>67</sup>

Further negotiation did take place in 1044 but the net result was an increase in the annual

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<sup>64</sup> Twitchett and Franke. p.108., Lorge, "The Great Ditch of China and the Song-Liao Border." p.64.

<sup>65</sup> Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China: Sung's Foreign Relations with Kitan Liao*. p.18. Many have commented on the careful wording of the treaty in which the Song payments are referred to as 'payments towards military expenses' rather than 'tribute', once again to try and signify the equality between the two parties. See, for example, Wright (above) as well as Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.109. and Jing-shen Tao, "Yu Ching and Sung Policies toward Liao and Hsia, 1042 — 1044," *Journal of Asian History* 6, no. 2 (1972): 114–22.

<sup>66</sup> In the initial instance, for example, the Liao emperor would refer to the Song emperor as his older brother simply because Zhao Heng was older than the contemporary Liao emperor, Longxu – see Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.4.

<sup>67</sup> Tansen Sen, "The Revival and Failure of Buddhist Translations during the Song Dynasty," *T'oung Pao* 88, no. 1/3 (2002): 27–80. p.39.

payment from Song to Liao.<sup>68</sup> In a sign of their permanent equal status, the two dynasties would refer to each other as the ‘Northern Court’ and ‘Southern Court’ respectively, a trend that was reflected by their neighbours, with Breuker noting that the same terminology was applied to the two dynasties by officials in the Koryŏ polity of the Korean peninsula.<sup>69</sup>

The eleventh century also saw the addition of a third major political force in the Chinese historical narrative – the Western Xia dynasty (1038-1227).<sup>70</sup> Operating in an area that would now include much of the provinces of Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, as well as parts of Shaanxi and Xinjiang, the Western Xia entered into conflict at different times with both the Liao and Song.<sup>71</sup> Although the Western Xia never received an official dynastic history, the dynasty is often treated as an equal player in the politics of this period with multiple histories referring to the eleventh century as the Song-Liao-Xia period.<sup>72</sup> While we will return to the Liao-Western Xia relationship in the second part of this chapter, it is worth noting at this juncture that at the various points each of the three shared treaties with one another, the Liao were never identified as anything other than the senior party in their political correspondence.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> For more on the negotiation of both treaties and their effect see: Tao, “Yu Ching and Sung Policies toward Liao and Hsia, 1042 — 1044.” p.114.

<sup>69</sup> Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170*. p.217.

<sup>70</sup> The rise of the Western Xia is covered in: Ruth Dunnell, “The Hsi Hsia,” in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Herbert Franke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 154–214., with the monograph by the same author remaining the premier source on this particular dynasty: Ruth Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1996).

<sup>71</sup> An account of the political rivalries between all three polities can be found in: Jing-shen Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven: Studies in Sung-Liao Relations* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988).

<sup>72</sup> For example, see: Bai Shouyi, *An Outline History of China*. pp.245-252.

<sup>73</sup> Tao, “Yu Ching and Sung Policies toward Liao and Hsia, 1042 — 1044.” p.116.

The Liao polity remained relatively stable, no doubt helped by the increase in funds from the peace treaties with the Song, into the twelfth century.<sup>74</sup> Twitchett and Franke state that the dynasty remained 'secure' until the year 1112 when Aguda, the leader of the Jurchen, a group based to the north-east of the Liao, refused to offer a gesture of submission to the Liao emperor, Yanxi. After increasing tension, the Jurchen attacked the Liao in 1117 and when peace attempts failed in 1119-20, the Liao were driven out of their own capitals over the following five years. When Yanxi was finally captured by the Jurchen in 1125, an event traditionally viewed as the end of the Liao dynasty, his relative power had already decreased to a significant degree.<sup>75</sup> Until this point though, the Liao had provided a political continuity in what is now northern China for over two centuries.

Why is it then, that when we trace the history of China, the Liao are normally left on the periphery? It is always the Song dynasty (and to an extent the Five Dynasties) that is seen as being representative of the tenth and eleventh centuries in which the Liao polity undeniably played a significant role. Dynastic timelines will sometimes miss out the Liao completely, or at least place them in a subordinate position to the Song despite the contemporary political reality.<sup>76</sup> To show how pervasive this perception of the Liao is, anyone searching for an image of a 'timeline of Chinese history' online today would be directed to the image in Fig.

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<sup>74</sup> It has been suggested that the Liao could not have survived as a political entity without these payments, claims often substantiated by environmental determinism, stating that the nomadic elements of the Liao needed the support of agrarian wealth and surpluses. This will be discussed later in the chapter but for an example of how this kind of determinism can affect even an otherwise progressive account of nomadic polities, see: Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History*. Or more specifically regarding the Liao, Wright's claim that the Liao could not have survived as a polity without the agrarian Sixteen Prefectures: Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China: Sung's Foreign Relations with Kitan Liao*. p.5.

<sup>75</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.140-151.

<sup>76</sup> Examples of both these phenomena can be found respectively in: Keay, *China: A History*. p.7. and Fairbank and Goldman, *China: A New History*. p.24.

1.2 as the first result.<sup>77</sup> This timeline shows a linear path through the history of ‘China’, a path which the Liao dynasty have been placed outside of. Something must have happened in the intervening years to create such a disparity between this peripheral perception of the Liao polity and its actual position within the contemporary East Asia of the tenth and eleventh centuries. A large portion of this must be attributed to the historical sources that we have available to us that inform our knowledge of this period.

### 1.2. The Historical Sources:

One cannot discuss the historical sources on the Liao without first addressing the rather large elephant in the room: the lack of voices available to us in the historical record from within the Liao polity. Barring epigraphy, all of the contemporary written material about the Liao was produced under the Song dynasty, the Liao’s direct rivals in the East Asian political sphere. The only major historical source to feature the Liao that was not produced from within the Song polity is the Liao’s official dynastic history, the *Liaoshi*, and this was produced over two centuries after the fall of the dynasty in 1344 (and with its content largely based on the aforementioned Song texts).<sup>78</sup> As mentioned in the timeline above though, the first Liao emperor, Abaoji, did order the creation of two Kitan scripts shortly after the dynasty’s inception but these face their own issues, both in terms of preservation and translation.

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<sup>77</sup> Writing as of 2018 – tested using the same search term in Google, Bing and Yahoo search. Image in Fig. 1.2 has been reproduced under Creative Commons License from the original creator listed as ‘SS’ from: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Timeline\\_of\\_Chinese\\_History.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Timeline_of_Chinese_History.jpg) (accessed 05/10/2018).

<sup>78</sup> For more detail on the sources that informed the *Liaoshi* including flow diagram between accounts, see: Standen, “Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources.” p.183.

### 1.2.1. The Kitan script - surviving examples and translation:

Prior to the formation of the Liao polity in 907, the Kitan people did not have their own written language. As a distinct group situated between the Tang and Uighur polities though, some individuals amongst the Kitan themselves, or at least people within their administration, would likely have been familiar with the Chinese characters and written language that informed inter-state communication and politics within the East Asian region in the second half of the first millennium. To call the pre-dynastic Kitan an ‘illiterate’ people then, is a supposition; albeit one with little direct evidence to the contrary.<sup>79</sup> Abaoji, at least, is thought to have been capable of reading and writing in the traditional Chinese characters of East Asia prior to calling for his own Kitan scripts to be created. Nevertheless, two Kitan scripts were created and were widely used by the end of Abaoji’s reign.<sup>80</sup> The first script, known as the Kitan large script, was created in 920 and based on Chinese characters. The second, the Kitan small script, came just five years later in 925 and is comprised of a combination of phonetic and logographic characters. Researchers on the Kitan small script have already uncovered 459 distinct graphs made up of twelve different radicals and three additional symbols.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> As claimed by: Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.67, among others. The absence of their own script does not exclude the possibility of certain Kitan being learned in Chinese characters and it must be remembered that this is the same script that the majority of East Asia used during this period.

<sup>80</sup> Twitchett and Franke. p.67. The authors also suggest that the Kitan and Chinese scripts may have been used as the primary forms of writing in the northern and southern administrations of the Liao polity respectively. Although both scripts were thought to be widely used, we have a greater number of preserved epigraphic examples in the Kitan Small Script. The most up to date collection of these inscriptions is published in: 刘凤翥 Liu Fengzhu, *Research on the Kitan Script*, ed. 契丹文字研究类编 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju (中华书局), 2014).

<sup>81</sup> Kane, “Introduction, Part 2: An Update on Deciphering the Kitan Language and Scripts.” p.14. This full list is still awaiting publication, although a list of 378 of these, along with potential readings, was published in: Chinggeltei et al., *Research on the Khitan Small Script*, (契丹小字研究) (Beijing: China Social Science Publishing (中国社会科学出版社), 1985).



After the fall of the Liao, the Kitan script remained in use under the Jurchen Jin dynasty, with more than thirty Jin officials of Jurchen descent mentioned in the *Jinshi* as being familiar with the script.<sup>82</sup> Even after the Jurchens introduced their own scripts in 1119 and 1138 (also known as the large and small scripts in a move aping the Kitan developments two centuries prior), Kitan and Chinese remained in use as official languages of the dynasty.<sup>83</sup> It was only in 1192 that Kitan was officially abolished in the Jin, although there are still isolated cases of the script being used after this date such as by Yelü Chucai (1189-1243), who learnt the script during a period spent in the polity of the Qara Khitai.<sup>84</sup>

Despite this widespread usage in the period of the tenth to twelfth centuries, very few Kitan texts have survived to the present day. There is, as yet, no evidence of either Kitan script (or those of the Jin or Xia) being used in political discourse between polities, with the Chinese script remaining the *lingua franca*.<sup>85</sup> Kane states that the main body of Kitan texts survive in the form of around forty epitaphs, all dating from the eleventh century. Although some of these inscriptions have been well preserved, many have been damaged and this may have resulted in some inaccurate transcriptions. Among the epigraphic evidence, there is just one short surviving Kitan-Chinese bilingual with no glossaries like those available for Middle

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<sup>82</sup> Chia-sheng Feng, "The Ch'i-Tan Script," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 68, no. 1 (1948): 14–18. p.18.

<sup>83</sup> Kane, *The Kitan Language and Script*. p.3.

<sup>84</sup> For the abolition of the Kitan script under the Jin see: Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.31. The Karakitan polity was formed after the fall of the Liao in 1124, an overview of this polity and period can be found in: Michal Biran, *The Empire of the Qara-Khitai in Eurasian History: Between China and the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For the Chinese references to Chucai's use of Kitan see: Kane, *The Kitan Language and Script*. p.4.

<sup>85</sup> For the lack of Kitan scripts in political discourse see: Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.20.

Mongolian.<sup>86</sup> It is perhaps unsurprising then, that Kitan - as either a language or script - has not yet been fully deciphered.

Before 1950, Kane informs us that there were only five known examples of the Kitan scripts totalling just 3000 graphs.<sup>87</sup> The discovery of a book potentially written in the Kitan Large script in Kyrgyzstan, likely dating from the Qara Khitai period (1124-1218), increased these numbers, but the large script has remained exceptionally difficult to decipher.<sup>88</sup> The famous grammarologist, Nishida Tatsuo, was quoted in 1991 as saying that ‘the Kitan script is only becoming more and more incomprehensible’,<sup>89</sup> and when Daniel Kane, one of the leading experts in Kitan came to write a monograph on the language he was told by his colleagues, quite succinctly, that: ‘it would not be a long book’.<sup>90</sup> Still, Kitan remains one of the most intriguing riddles in the field of Altaic linguistics and as such continues to generate significant interest amongst scholars.<sup>91</sup> The discipline is moving forward with a recent consensus that Kitan can be considered a ‘paramongolic’ language, a cousin of proto-Mongol.<sup>92</sup> With new Kitan texts being discovered at a rate of approximately one per year, there is also hope that our knowledge of both scripts, and the language more generally, will continue to increase.<sup>93</sup> Even if/when these developments occur though, the sparsity of written

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<sup>86</sup> Kane, *The Kitan Language and Script*. p.ix.

<sup>87</sup> Kane. p.2.

<sup>88</sup> Michal Biran, “Unearthing the Liao Dynasty’s Relations with the Muslim World: Migrations, Diplomacy, Commerce, and Mutual Perceptions,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 43, no. 1 (2013): 221–51. p.249. Biran notes that although the book remains undeciphered, the frequency of the Kitan words for state and emperor suggest it may be some form of history – possibly even the *Liaoshi shilu*.

<sup>89</sup> Kane, *The Kitan Language and Script*. p.ix.

<sup>90</sup> Kane. p.x.

<sup>91</sup> In 2016, a nine day workshop was hosted by Yale University bringing together many of the leading experts in this field – see: <https://cesmabirmingham.wordpress.com/2016/06/09/kitan-language-crash-course-at-yale-university-11th-19th-may-2016/> (accessed 27/08/17).

<sup>92</sup> Kane, “Introduction, Part 2: An Update on Deciphering the Kitan Language and Scripts.” p.12.

<sup>93</sup> Kane. p.23.

Kitan, although providing a counterpoint, will still not replace the need for the Chinese language materials that have dominated the discipline up to this point.

### 1.2.2. Chinese language sources - the *Liaoshi*:

The *Liaoshi*, or the ‘History of Liao’, is the official dynastic history of the Liao and was completed in 1344 under Yuan dynasty patronage by a team led by Toqto’a, the Yuan court historian and his team of compilers.<sup>94</sup> By far the most extensive source on the Liao, the text consists of thirty *juan* of ‘Imperial Annals’, thirty-two *juan* of ‘Records of Institutions’, eight *juan* of ‘Tables’, forty-eight *juan* of ‘Biographies and Descriptions’ and a glossary of Kitan terms.<sup>95</sup> The *Liaoshi* exists as part of a longstanding tradition of dynastic histories written in Chinese: a tradition in which each new dynasty would compile the history of its predecessor that can be dated back to Sima Qian’s *Shiji*, or ‘Records of the Grand Historian’.<sup>96</sup> As a result, the *Liaoshi* adheres to formulaic pre-conceived ideas about how a dynastic history should be constructed, what it should contain, and even the style in which it should be written.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> A survey of the available histories that feature the Liao (with a focus on the coverage of the 10<sup>th</sup> century), including the *Liaoshi* can be found in: Standen, “Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources.”

<sup>95</sup> Xu, “Historical Development of the Pre-Dynastic Khitan.” p.22. Much of the text has been translated into English with a full commentary by: Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*.

<sup>96</sup> For the *Shiji* see: Watson Burton, *Records of the Grand Historian* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). It should be noted that the actual ‘dynastic history’ format is often attributed to Ban Gu’s *Qian Hanshu*, or ‘Book of the Former Han’ however, see: 尤學工 You Xuegong, “On the History of the Yi (論易代修史),” *Langfang Shifan Xueyuan Xuebao* 6 (2013): 51–56. p.51.

<sup>97</sup> Bettine Birge, “Rock, Paper, Scissors: The Nature of Local Sources and Understanding Regional History in Imperial China,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 52, no. 1 (2009): 4–13. pp.6-7.

Of the dynastic histories though, the *Liaoshi* has been noted for its deficiencies in many areas.<sup>98</sup> Wittfogel and Feng point to the population data being one area where this is particularly apparent.<sup>99</sup> Other descriptions of the history are less generous, criticising the entire body of the text: Xu describes it as rife with ‘technical errors, a lack of precision, even overlaps and self-contradictions’ and Lin suggests that it is ‘permeated with sinitic cultural prejudices and Confucian moral judgements’.<sup>100</sup> Compounding this is the suggestion from Crossley that recent archaeological work is demonstrating that the evidence in the *Liaoshi* is even more fragmentary than previously realised, highlighting cases of individuals who have been found to be named incorrectly in the text when compared with newly excavated epigraphy.<sup>101</sup> In agreement with this point, Kane observes that certain Kitan figures are even given conflicting names within the text itself and that the Chinese transcriptions of Kitan words also prove to be inaccurate more generally.<sup>102</sup> One of the major reasons cited for this perceived weakness is that the records available to the Yuan dynasty compilers were simply not as thorough as those of other dynasties. This has been attributed by some to the poor records kept by the Liao administration, as well as the more obvious point of the enormous chronological gap between the end of the Liao dynasty and the history’s compilation.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Although it should be noted that this only applies to official dynastic histories. In the Liao period alone, others received equally (or probably even more) scant historical treatment. The ten kingdoms for example, in not being included in the dynastic succession like the Five Dynasties, are particularly difficult to find contemporary sources on: Johannes Kurz, “A Survey of the Historical Sources for the Five Dynasties and Ten States in Song Times,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 33 (2003): 187–224. p.187.

<sup>99</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.31.

<sup>100</sup> See respectively: Xu, “Historical Development of the Pre-Dynastic Khitan.” p.22. and Lin, “Perceptions of Liao Urban Landscapes: Political Practices and Nomadic Empires.” p.228.

<sup>101</sup> Crossley, “Outside In: Power, Identity, and the Han Lineage of Jizhou.” p.53.

<sup>102</sup> Kane, *The Kitan Language and Script*. p.xii.

<sup>103</sup> For the accusation against the Liao Dynasty records see: Biran, “Unearthing the Liao Dynasty’s Relations with the Muslim World: Migrations, Diplomacy, Commerce, and Mutual Perceptions.” p.223. Although this may be refuted given that as early as the reign of Abaoji, officials had been appointed for historical composition and the Liao had a National History office based on Tang models: Hok-Lam Chan, “Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories,” in *China Under Mongol Rule*, ed. John. D. Langlois (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). p.60. Many have pointed at the gap between the end of the dynasty and the production of the history as a contributing factor, as well as Biran (above). This has been commented on by Liao specialists such as: Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese*

So what sources did Toqto'a and the Yuan compilers base their history on? The Liao administration kept their own records, with Chan stating that officials had been appointed for historical composition within Abaoji's lifetime and that specific Liao historical records were mentioned within the *Liaoshi* as having existed from at least as early as 941.<sup>104</sup> The dynasty eventually created an official 'State History Office' and by 991 a preliminary compilation of government records called the *Shilu*, or 'veritable records', had been completed by Yelü Yan.<sup>105</sup> A later edition of the *Shilu* was completed in 1085 and is believed to have formed the basis for an incomplete Jin dynasty history of the Liao compiled by Chen Daren around 1148.<sup>106</sup> Unfortunately, none of these records have survived to this day and perhaps not even to the time of the compilation of the *Liaoshi* (or at least not in a complete and unedited or abridged form).<sup>107</sup>

Instead of the Liao's own records then, the *Liaoshi* is based primarily on the Song historical record with a wide range of sources from the two histories of the Five Dynasties, the *Jiu wudaishi* (974) and the *Xin wudaishi* (1075), as well as two more texts of a wider scope in the form of the *Zizhi tongjian* (1084) and the *Cefu yuangui* (1013). Alongside these is the *Qidan guozhi* (1247) produced after the fall of the Liao, as well as other private records and

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*Society Liao (907-1125)*., Kane, *The Kitan Language and Script*. and Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources."

<sup>104</sup> Chan, "Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories." p.60. Also, for the historical records from 941 see: Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.28.

<sup>105</sup> For the creation of the 'National History Office' see: Chan, "Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories." p.60. and for the compilation of the *Shilu* see: Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.28.

<sup>106</sup> Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.183.

<sup>107</sup> Standen. p.189.

diplomatic envoy reports from the Liao period.<sup>108</sup> Standen has pointed out though, that this is still not the end of the story, with the later of these Song works being largely based upon the earlier examples (particularly the *Jiu wudaishi* for the 10<sup>th</sup> century) with numerous edits and changes over the years depending on the contemporary political situation.<sup>109</sup>

It is traditional for each incoming dynasty to write the official history of their predecessor. The Yuan dynasty, having conquered both the Liao's direct successors, the Jin dynasty, as well as the Song dynasty, took it upon themselves to compile a history of both. The Liao dynasty were also included as they had never received a completed dynastic history from the Jin administration.<sup>110</sup> In what Chan has described as 'one of the most ambitious projects of Chinese historiography', Toqto'a made the decision to compile the histories of all three of these dynasties simultaneously.<sup>111</sup> Pushing the project forward at breakneck speed, thirty-three historians were put to the task and within three years, each of the three histories was completed.<sup>112</sup> The *Liaoshi* itself was completed in less than a year and stood at just 116 *juan* in length, this compared to the 135 *juan* of the *Jinshi* and the 496 of the *Songshi*.<sup>113</sup> Even

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<sup>108</sup> See: Chan, "Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories.", Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.83., and Xu, "Historical Development of the Pre-Dynastic Khitan." p.22. All of these texts will also be explored individually later in this chapter.

<sup>109</sup> Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.148. The author also notes that the Song had little interest in recording the details from the Kitan historical records so it is unlikely that their results were passed indirectly to the Yuan compilers through these Song sources (p.157).

<sup>110</sup> The Western Xia Dynasty, however, were not included in the project in a decision possibly attributed to the fact that they kept all of their historical records in Tangut rather than the Chinese *lingua franca*, see: Chan, "Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories." p.67.

<sup>111</sup> Chan. p.56.

<sup>112</sup> Yuan Chen, "Legitimation Discourse and the Theory of the Five Elements in Imperial China," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 44, no. 1 (2014): 325–64. p.357.

<sup>113</sup> Note that *juan* (卷), often translated as book, scroll, chapter or section is the standard unit of measure for sections within Chinese language historical texts. For the hasty completion of the *Liaoshi* see: Xu, "Historical Development of the Pre-Dynastic Khitan." p.22. and Chan, "Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories." p.57.

taking into account the extra duration of the Song dynasty though, at 319 years to the Liao's 218, this still works out at approximately 0.5 *juan* per year for the Liao to the Song's 1.6 (with the Jin coming in between the two at 1.19 *Juan* per year).<sup>114</sup> This begs the question of why the histories of the Jin and particularly the Song were favoured by the Yuan compilers? In order to establish this though, it is first important to understand some aspects of the historical tradition within which the Yuan compilers were working.

### 1.2.3. Dynastic Cycles - the 'Mandate of Heaven' and the 'Five Elements' theory:

The Chinese language historical tradition has been hailed as one of the earliest and longest standing historical traditions in the world and is frequently traced back to the figure of Confucius. This lineage has also been cast even further into the past with the tradition's origins also claimed in the Zhou (c.1046-256BCE), Shang (c.1600-1046BCE) and sometimes as early as the Xia dynasty (c.2070-1600BCE).<sup>115</sup> While the case for these earlier dynasties is difficult to verify, it would be difficult to argue that a distinct, Chinese language historical tradition had not already been in existence for at least a millennium by the time the Liao dynasty began in 907.<sup>116</sup> It would be hugely reductive to state that this tradition had survived

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<sup>114</sup> Although the Standard Histories are not laid out purely chronologically (with the number of *juan* therefore not being directly related to the number of years of the dynasty), this is still a useful metric as it demonstrates the relative detail put into each account.

<sup>115</sup> For more on the potential origins of the Chinese historical tradition refer to: Qizhi Zhang, *An Introduction to Chinese History and Culture* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2015). P353-354. There is, however, scepticism into the origins of the tradition as evidenced in: Michael Puett, "Classical Chinese Historical Thought," in *A Companion to Global Historical Thought*, ed. Prasenjit Duara, Viren Murthy, and Andrew Sartori (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 34–46. p.36-8. Also, please note that when I refer to the 'Chinese language historical tradition' here, I refer only to the conventions of the shared written language used across East Asia in the Liao period, and earlier, that we now refer to in English as 'Chinese'. There is no intent on the part of the author in the use of this terminology to tie this written language to the modern national body of China.

<sup>116</sup> Sima Qian's 'Records of the Grand Historian' were completed in 94BC, the existence and historical purpose of which can be verified with far more certainty than the earlier archetypal texts attributed to Confucius, such as the 'Spring and Autumn Annals'.

unchanged throughout the first millennium of the Common Era, but there are certain concepts and approaches that seem to have carried through. Puett has argued that, within this historical tradition, although the actual recording of the past was viewed as important, it remained secondary to the act of trying to understand the past and the placing of events within larger patterns which could inform contemporary practices.<sup>117</sup> One of these major patterns is the idea of the ‘Mandate of Heaven’ (*Tianming* - 天命) being used as a tool of dynastic succession and legitimacy.<sup>118</sup>

The concept of ‘Heaven’ within this tradition is not as a universal single god in the Abrahamic sense, but rather, as a guiding moral force exerting influence over natural phenomena and historical agents.<sup>119</sup> Rulers who undertook their duty with the appropriate moral character were seen as possessing Heaven’s mandate and, therefore, the right to rule. Conversely, those of poor moral character would lose this mandate, a situation often signified by portentous celestial signs or natural disasters such as earthquakes or famine.<sup>120</sup> The ‘Mandate of Heaven’ then, became a way of regulating the dynastic cycle we introduced at the beginning of the chapter.

Those who possessed Heaven’s mandate are described as being the ruler of ‘All under Heaven’ (*Tianxia*, 天下), leaving room for only one ruler at any given time within this historical tradition (regardless of the actual political reality). Heaven’s mandate would then

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<sup>117</sup> Puett, “Classical Chinese Historical Thought.” p.34.

<sup>118</sup> This concept is believed to have begun in the Zhou Dynasty where Heaven (天) is portrayed in the ‘Book of Documents’ as a moral deity with power to provide legitimacy to houses considered worthy and, equally, take it away from emperors and dynasties who did not meet the required moral standard. See: Puett. p.35.

<sup>119</sup> Chen, “Legitimation Discourse and the Theory of the Five Elements in Imperial China.” p.331.

<sup>120</sup> 孫小淳 Sun Xiaochun, “The Role of Astronomy in Ancient Chinese Society and Culture (天文學在古代中國社會文化中的作用),” *Zhongguo Kejishi Zazhi* 中國科技史雜誌, no. 1 (2009): 5–15. p.6.



be passed on from father to son, creating dynastic successions that would only be broken when an individual in the chain demonstrated poor moral character and therefore forfeited that dynasty's right to rule. In the case of a dynasty losing Heaven's mandate, a new potential ruler would always eventually arise and demonstrate their moral fortitude and with it the right to rule 'All under Heaven' and the chance to begin their own dynasty.<sup>121</sup>

Alongside the concept of the 'Mandate of Heaven', there ran another framework that helped to explain the cycle of dynasties within the Chinese language historical tradition: the 'Five Elements' (*Wuxing*, 五行) theory. Believed to have first appeared in the Confucian classics: the *Shangshu* (尚書 – The Book of Documents) and the *Liji* (禮記 – The book of Rites'), the 'Five Elements' consisted of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth.<sup>122</sup> In this theory, each element is seen as having dominance over one of the other elements with wood taking dominance over earth, earth over water, water over fire, fire over metal and, completing the circle, metal taking dominance over wood. There is also an inverse effect, in that each element is also seen as the prerequisite for the creation of the next, thus: water generates wood, wood generates fire, fire generates earth, earth generates metal, and metal generates water (Fig. 1.3).

The circle of the 'Five Elements' has been used to represent many different things, from the interaction of the organs of the body through to the planets of the cosmos. Of interest to our

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<sup>121</sup> Puett, "Classical Chinese Historical Thought." p.34.

<sup>122</sup> Note that *Jin* (金) often also appears as 'gold' rather than 'metal' in many English translations. Introductions to the 'Five Elements' theory and its significance to the construction of history can be found in: Zhang, *An Introduction to Chinese History and Culture*. Chapter 12, pp. 353-376, while the specific case of the Liao is explored in: Chen, "Legitimation Discourse and the Theory of the Five Elements in Imperial China.", and Chan, "Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories."

understanding of the historical tradition though, is that dynasties each came to be represented by one of these elements.<sup>123</sup> From the third century BCE, the philosopher Zou Yan (305-240) had suggested that dynasties were seen to have progressed with the cycle of the elements.<sup>124</sup> For example: the earth element of the Tang dynasty (618-907) was seen as the natural successor to the fire element claimed by the Sui (581-618) because within the ‘Five Elements’ system, fire is seen as the natural prerequisite for the generation of earth. In choosing a dynastic element then, a dynasty was not only providing a form of self-identification, but also acknowledging who they identified as the previous possessor of Heaven’s mandate.<sup>125</sup>

This brings us back to the situation of the Liao and Song dynasties. Given that the concept of both the ‘Mandate of Heaven’ and its relation to the ‘Five Elements’ theory were already long established in East Asia; it is perhaps unsurprising that each of the two dynasties chose their own dynastic element as an expression of their right to rule all under Heaven.<sup>126</sup> In an article on the relationship between the ‘Five Elements’ and the dynastic succession, Chen has put forward the suggestion that the Liao emperors chose water as their dynastic element, recognising the Later Jin (936-947) of the ‘Five Dynasties’ as the previous holders of Heaven’s mandate.<sup>127</sup> The Song, on the other hand, chose fire as their dynastic element,

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<sup>123</sup> Zhang, *An Introduction to Chinese History and Culture*. p.355.

<sup>124</sup> Dynasties prior to this point were also assigned elements but Chen has pointed out that these were likely also a construct of Zou Yan, see: Chen, “Legitimation Discourse and the Theory of the Five Elements in Imperial China.” p.328.

<sup>125</sup> Chen. p.364.

<sup>126</sup> As did the Liao’s contemporaries of the Five Dynasties and the also the Ten Kingdoms. The Ten Kingdoms were, however, at no point considered by subsequent dynasties as having possessed Heaven’s mandate, see: Kurz, “A Survey of the Historical Sources for the Five Dynasties and Ten States in Song Times.” p.193.

<sup>127</sup> Chen, “Legitimation Discourse and the Theory of the Five Elements in Imperial China.” p.14. It is important to note here that there is no record in the *Liaoshi* of the Liao having chosen a dynastic element and that this reference comes from a Jin Dynasty document: ‘Charts and Explanations Concerning the Elemental Virtue of the Great Jin’ (大金德運圖說 - *Da Jin deyun tu shuo*), a translation of which is available in: Hok-Lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China: Discussions under the Jurchen-Chin Dynasty* (London: University of

suggesting that they officially recognised each of the Five Dynasties as having possessed Heaven's mandate before it eventually came into their own possession in 960.<sup>128</sup> Given that within the framework of this historical tradition, only one dynasty can possess Heaven's mandate at any given time, the Liao and Song accounts of the dynastic succession remain irreconcilable from a logical standpoint. This situation created a problem for Toqto'a and the Yuan dynasty compilers of the *Liaoshi*, *Songshi*, and *Jinshi*, as they had to choose a single legitimate line of imperial succession from the end of the Tang to the beginning of their own dynasty more than three centuries later.<sup>129</sup>

There was debate among the historical compilers as to how to proceed. There was a school of thought that suggested it may have been most practical to break with the universalising logic of a single 'Mandate', and instead present two distinct historical timelines based on a separate northern and southern succession.<sup>130</sup> This was not an idea without precedent, a succession of separate northern and southern dynasties that had existed between 420-589 (later known as the 'Northern and Southern Dynasties' period) were each granted their own histories under the Tang. Twitchett and Franke claim that there was little difference in the political reality between the contemporary situation of the Liao and Song and that of the 'Northern and Southern Dynasties' some four centuries earlier.<sup>131</sup>

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Washington Press, 1984). p.84. Another interesting point for discussion here is the implication this might have for the start date we give to the Liao Dynasty, in choosing the water element they are implicitly stating that the Liao only began as a dynasty in 947.

<sup>128</sup> Although there was debate in the court as to whether the Five Dynasties should be included at all, with another option being for the Song to claim the 'metal' element and with it claim that they were the direct successors of the Tang bypassing the Five Dynasties entirely, see: Chen, "Legitimation Discourse and the Theory of the Five Elements in Imperial China." p.332.

<sup>129</sup> There are two articles focussed on the compilation of these histories and the issues of choosing the legitimate succession, these are: Chan, "Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories." And Chen, "Legitimation Discourse and the Theory of the Five Elements in Imperial China."

<sup>130</sup> Chan, "Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories." p.73.

<sup>131</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.16.

Despite this awareness that neither the Liao or Song emperors could really lay claim to universal rule, the Yuan historians decided against choosing the route of separate ‘northern’ and ‘southern’ histories and instead charted a path of singular legitimate succession. Of the available options, it was decided that Heaven’s mandate had passed from the Tang to the Yuan through the intermediaries of the Five Dynasties, the Song and the Jin (Fig. 1.4). Concrete reasoning for this decision remains uncertain, but there are a number of factors that may have contributed.

The first of these factors we have already established, in that the accounts of the Liao that reached the Yuan court were based primarily on Song dynasty texts. Secondly, the Yuan never came into contact with the Liao directly, with the Liao having been conquered by the Jin long before the rise of the Mongols and the Yuan. The Yuan may therefore have felt it lent more credence to their claims of legitimacy to be the direct conquerors of both previous holders of the mandate. As for the inclusion of the Five Dynasties in the dynastic succession, it is possible that the prior existence of two official histories produced under the Song (*Jiu wudaishi* and *Xin wudaishi*) may have promoted their chances, thus denying the contemporaneous Liao. If the decision to include the Song had already been made, then the pre-existing Song histories of the Five Dynasties would also have to have been accepted in order for the dynastic timeline and progression of the ‘Five Elements’ presented by the Song to make sense.

Compounding these factors, the Jin dynasty history of the Liao that would have provided an alternative timeline was never completed, and it is unknown how many of the Liao’s own

historical records were passed on to the Yuan after they conquered the Jin in 1234. The Jin historians of the twelfth century also had their own debates about who they had claimed the 'Mandate' from. After a reported eight years of discussions between 1194 and 1202, the Jin had identified the Song over the Liao as the previous holders of Heaven's mandate.<sup>132</sup> This decision provided a pre-made logical dynastic succession which the Yuan compilers seem to have decided to follow.<sup>133</sup>

Despite losing out on being seen to have possessed Heaven's mandate, the compilation of the *Liaoshi* still went ahead. The reasoning behind this decision is unclear with Chen suggesting that perhaps the only reason that the Liao even received their own history was because Kublai Khan sympathised with the dynasty.<sup>134</sup> A more pragmatic suggestion, proposed by Standen, suggests that the Yuan may have been trying to demonstrate their legitimacy in all the lands they claimed as their own. They therefore needed to create a history of both north and south in the years between the Tang and their own accession.<sup>135</sup> Whatever the reasons for its creation, the *Liaoshi* did not receive the same attention as the histories of the Song or Jin, being completed in a third of the time that was dedicated to the other two histories. Also, the lack of a Liao voice in the materials that informed it allowed for the perpetuation of a Song view of the Liao polity in later histories.

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<sup>132</sup> The debate lasted from 1194 to 1202, see: Chan, "Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories." p.61

<sup>133</sup> It had previously been argued that the Yuan saw themselves as the successors of the Song rather than the Jin but this may have been a result of later Ming alterations to the dynastic succession, see Chen, "Legitimation Discourse and the Theory of the Five Elements in Imperial China." p.326.

<sup>134</sup> Chen. p.359.

<sup>135</sup> Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.157.

Even given all of the above, the *Liaoshi* still remains an essential source for the study of the Liao. Wittfogel and Feng, in their translation of the text to English reiterate that: as the official history for the dynasty, the *Liaoshi* remains the most comprehensive source for information pertaining to the Liao and also provides a framework against which other materials can be incorporated, compared and contrasted.<sup>136</sup> Comparison between the *Liaoshi* and the older histories upon which it was based can help to uncover the ideology of those constructing these histories in different periods and the changing perceptions of the Liao's position in East Asia.<sup>137</sup> As Birge reminds us, in East Asia, as with the historiography of any region, we 'must attach as much significance to what is omitted from a text as to what is included, and that each subsequent narrative serves to obscure aspects of history as it reveals others'.<sup>138</sup> We are therefore often reliant on the other historical sources from the Song period to supplement and check against the account given within the *Liaoshi*. The major Song texts for the Liao period will be covered briefly in chronological order below.

#### **1.2.4. The *Jiu wudaishi* (舊五代史 - Old History of the Five Dynasties):**

The *Jiu wudaishi* (舊五代史), or 'Old History of the Five Dynasties', was compiled by Xue Juzheng (912-981) under the orders of the first Song emperor, Zhao Kuangyin (927-976).<sup>139</sup> Based on the official records kept by the Five Dynasties themselves, the text was rushed to

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<sup>136</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.26.

<sup>137</sup> Fruitful examples of this approach can be found in: Crossley, "Outside In: Power, Identity, and the Han Lineage of Jizhou." and Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty: Frontier Crossings in Liao China*.

<sup>138</sup> Birge, "Rock, Paper, Scissors: The Nature of Local Sources and Understanding Regional History in Imperial China." p.6.

<sup>139</sup> Although there is no English translation currently available, for an annotated Chinese edition see: Xue Juzheng, *Jiu Wudaishi*. Note that the text would originally have been referred to simply as the *Wudaishi* or 'History of the Five Dynasties', but became known as the 'Old History' after the completion of Ouyang Xiu's 'New History of the Five Dynasties in 1073.

completion in 974, a process taking just eighteen months.<sup>140</sup> Although focussed on the dynastic succession between the Five Dynasties that led to the Song taking on the ‘Mandate of Heaven’ in 960, the structure of the text created a lot of opportunities for the Liao dynasty to make an appearance. Only the first two Liao emperors receive their own biographies in *juan* 137 (an insignificant number of individuals compared to those included from each of the Five Dynasties) of the text, but Standen has noted that the Liao polity and its people frequently make appearances in the biographies of dozens of other individuals and turn up as ‘military backup, raiders, and envoys’ throughout the annals.<sup>141</sup>

The *Jiu wudaishi* has often been criticised by subsequent scholars for its lack of focus and intellectual rigour. Davis states that the 150 *juan* length is completely unjustified for a period of just over half a century and that the text had an uncritical reliance on the official sources upon which it was based, primarily copying in large sections verbatim.<sup>142</sup> It is precisely this lack of editing though that makes the *Jiu wudaishi* such a valuable source, preserving the interaction of the Kitan and the Five Dynasties as they were recorded at the time rather than heavily filtered through an increasingly antagonistic Song perspective.<sup>143</sup> The text demonstrates how intertwined the political worlds of the Liao and the Five Dynasties were, a situation that would be less apparent from the later histories of either dynasty.<sup>144</sup> It is also

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<sup>140</sup> Standen, “Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources.” p.148. For more on the record keeping and the construction of history in the ‘Five Dynasties’, see: 張峰 Zhang Feng, “Assessing the Compilation of Histories in the Five Dynasties (五代時期歷史編纂優良傳統經受的考驗),” *Renwen Zazhi* 人文雜誌, 12 (2014): 81–86.

<sup>141</sup> Standen, “Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources.” p.163.

<sup>142</sup> Richard Davis, *Historical Records of the Five Dynasties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). p.xlvi. To put the 150 *juan* length into context, bear in mind that more than two centuries of Liao history were packed into just 116 *juan*.

<sup>143</sup> Standen, “Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources.” p.163.

<sup>144</sup> Standen. p.160.

important to note that, for the period from 907 to 960, the *Jiu wudaishi* is the foundational text upon which most later histories, including the *Liaoshi*, were ultimately based.<sup>145</sup>

### 1.2.5. The *Cefu yuangui* (冊府元龜):

First published in 1013, the *Cefu yuangui* (a title that remains a challenge to translate), was compiled over the course of eight years by a group of scholars led by the Song official Wang Qinruo (962-1025).<sup>146</sup> Unlike the *Jiu wudaishi*, the *Cefu yuangui* is not a standard history but rather a *leishu* (類書), often translated as ‘encyclopaedia’.<sup>147</sup> Wright has suggested that the *Cefu yuangui* can be seen as a ‘textual reaffirmation of an ideal Chinese world order (...) presenting an idealised picture of tribute and foreign relations in the distant past’.<sup>148</sup> Like the *Jiu wudaishi*, the *Cefu yuangui* recognises the Five Dynasties over the Liao as carrying the legitimate line of succession for Heaven’s mandate. The Liao are therefore recorded only as a foreign polity, rather than having any of their leaders acknowledged in the official list of emperors. The text does, however, include some biographies not found in the official histories of the Five Dynasties period that are yet to receive systematic survey for material regarding the Liao.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Standen. p.148.

<sup>146</sup> This rather unusual name when translated into English is a reference to the oracles inscribed into tortoise shells in the Shang Dynasty (c.1600-1046BCE). There is currently no English translation of the text, for the Chinese see: 王欽若 Wang Qinruo, *Cefu Yuangui*, 冊府元龜 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju (中华书局), 1960).

<sup>147</sup> The remit of the text therefore goes way beyond history, covering thirty-one different topics in a text that spread over 9.4 million characters, for the layout and structure of the *Cefu yuangui*, see the introduction to: 劉乃和 Liu Naihe, *New Research into the Cefu Yuangui*, ‘冊府元龜’新探 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Shuhuashe 中州書畫社, 1983). pp.1-28.

<sup>148</sup> Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China: Sung’s Foreign Relations with Kitan Liao*. p.23.

<sup>149</sup> Standen, “Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources.” p.186.



### 1.2.6. The *Xin wudaishi* (新五代史 – New History of the Five Dynasties):

The *Xin wudaishi*, unlike the *Jiu wudaishi*, started out as a private enterprise rather than a state sponsored official history.<sup>150</sup> Written by Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072), a man described by Davis as ‘a giant among giants on the eleventh-century intellectual landscape’, the main body of the text was written between 1036 and 1039 but was only published posthumously in 1073.<sup>151</sup> Ouyang succeeded in reducing the number of *juan* in the *Jiu wudaishi* from one-hundred-and-fifty to just seventy-four in his new history of the period, a figure far more in line with other dynastic histories. The *Xin wudaishi* was judged to be such a success that it was recognised as an official history of the Five Dynasties period and led to Ouyang being commissioned to also compose a new history for the Tang dynasty in 1060.<sup>152</sup> The *Xin wudaishi* does, however, reflect a change in the treatment of the Liao dynasty when compared with its predecessor.

In the intervening century between the publication of the two histories, the East Asian political sphere had changed drastically. Shortly after the completion of the *Jiu wudaishi* in 973, the Song conquest of the Northern Han had put the Song and the Liao into direct competition and even war.<sup>153</sup> Although there was peace between the two regional powers by

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<sup>150</sup> Unfortunately, while a translation of the *Xin wudaishi* has been completed, the section concerning the ‘Four Types of Barbarian’ which featured the Liao was omitted due to the author’s perceived deficiencies in the original text. For the full translation see Davis, *Historical Records of the Five Dynasties*. and for the Chinese original text, refer to: Ouyang Xiu, *Xin Wudaishi*.

<sup>151</sup> Davis, *Historical Records of the Five Dynasties*. p.xliv.

<sup>152</sup> Davis. p.xli.

<sup>153</sup> The two dynasties had met in conflict over the Northern Han prior to this point but military operations directly between the two polities only began with the Song invasion of the Sixteen Prefectures in 979.

the time Ouyang was writing in 1036, the Treaty of Chanyuan in 1004 had placed both dynasties on an equal footing, damaging the Song claims to Heaven's mandate and forcing hefty reparations from the Song to the Liao. In addition, a third major regional power was rising in the form of the Western Xia dynasty (1038-1227), destabilising the balance that the Treaty of Chanyuan had created.<sup>154</sup> Given this contemporary climate, Ouyang Xiu deliberately reduced the role the Liao played during the Five Dynasties in the *Xin wudaishi*. Rather than having the Liao interwoven into the narratives of the annals and biographies like in the *Jiu wudaishi*, the dynasty is instead removed from the text almost completely, featuring only in the appendices of the history describing the 'Four Types of Barbarian' (四夷 – *sìyì*) in *juan* 72-74.<sup>155</sup>

In switching from including the Liao as 'foreign rulers' in the *Jiu wudaishi*, to one of the 'four barbarians' in his own text, Ouyang removed political agency from the Liao. The dynasty is therefore reduced to the ethnicity of its leaders; the 'Liao' become the 'Kitan', a 'state' becomes a 'tribe', and thus the Liao become separated from the civilised political stratum in Ouyang's presentation of the Five Dynasties world order.<sup>156</sup> Tackett has suggested that this may have been representative of a larger programme of Song identity being formed

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<sup>154</sup> For details on the rise of the Western Xia in this period and its political repercussions, see: Dunnell, "The Hsi Hsia." pp.180-189.

<sup>155</sup> Although within those appendices the Liao do receive two *juan*, compared to the one that they receive explicitly about the Liao polity in the *Jiu wudaishi*, see: Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.172. Also, note that although traditionally translated as barbarian, the usage of the term *yi* (夷) changed over time and may not have possessed the same semantic baggage as the English term. The term *yi* does seem to have gained more negative connotations in this period though, due to the work of Ouyang Xiu, among others such as Li Kai, Shi Jie and Sun Fu, see: Shao-yun Yang, "Reinventing the Barbarian: Rhetorical and Philosophical Uses of the Yi-Di in Mid-Imperial China, 600-1300" (University of California, Berkeley, 2014). Part 3 – Use and interpretations of barbarism in the Ancient Style revival ca.970-ca.1070. pp.179-267.

<sup>156</sup> Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.173.

in opposition to the Liao.<sup>157</sup> In separating the Liao from the Five Dynasties in the *Xin wudaishi*, the Liao are instead framed as a perpetual antagonist throughout the period, an image that has since persisted due to the use of Ouyang's text in the creation of later works.<sup>158</sup>

The *Xin wudaishi* is also known for its sense of moral judgement, with Ouyang selecting biographies based on the moral lessons they could present.<sup>159</sup> This is one of the few ways in which the Liao (albeit still framed as the 'Kitan') find a place within the narrative, with non-Kitan individuals who served under the Liao administration such as Han Yanhui and Zhao Dejun receiving coverage. These individuals though are negatively judged for their association with a 'barbarian' regime, further perpetuating the image of the Liao as a negative 'other'.<sup>160</sup> Standen concludes that this side-lining of the Liao and the emphasis on southern, non-Kitan, individuals mean that one can read the *Xin wudaishi* without ever having to engage with the Liao as a political entity.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Nicolas Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation: Song China and the Forging of an East Asian World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). pp.276-7.

<sup>158</sup> Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.159.

<sup>159</sup> This was done to emulate the 'Spring and Autumn Annals' (春秋 – Chunqiu) of Confucius, see: James Liu, *Ou-Yang Hsiu: An Eleventh-Century Neo-Confucianist* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967)., Davis, *Historical Records of the Five Dynasties*. p.xliv. and Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.169.

<sup>160</sup> Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.171-172. Standen has also put forward that the loyalty of individuals such as these was much more fluid in the period of the Five Dynasties than they were in Ouyang Xiu's time, with many frequently valuing local allegiances over dynastic ties. By comparing accounts in the old and new histories of the Five Dynasties, Ouyang's moral judgement is seen to be a product of his time rather than a reflection of the attitudes that existed in the tenth century, see: Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty: Frontier Crossings in Liao China*.

<sup>161</sup> Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.170.

### 1.2.7. The *Zizhi tongjian* (資治通鑑 – Comprehensive Mirror to the Aid of Government):

Completed by Sima Guang (1019-1086) in 1084, a scholar rated by de Crespigny, as ‘possibly the greatest of all Chinese historians’, the *Zizhi tongjian* took over nineteen years to compile and spans approximately three million characters.<sup>162</sup> Like the *Cefu yuangui*, the *Zizhi tongjian* was not a standard dynastic history but instead represented a historical survey covering events from the Warring States through to the Five Dynasties (403BCE-960CE) and was compiled with the assistance of other recognised scholars: Liu Shu, Liu Ban and Fan Zuyu.<sup>163</sup> The *Zizhi tongjian* was therefore a massive undertaking, utilising some 320 separate sources in its compilation and containing extra chapters critically evaluating these sources and comparing their reliability.<sup>164</sup> Sima Guang’s aim was to create a text that contained only the most important events from history, events that could inform the decisions of the current dynasty - learning from the good decisions of their predecessors while also avoiding the pitfalls that had befallen others.<sup>165</sup>

Like Ouyang Xiu’s *Xin wudaishi*, the *Zizhi tongjian* is a visible product of the politically volatile eleventh century. The authors negative attitudes towards the Liao seem to be

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<sup>162</sup> Rafe de Crespigny, “Universal Histories,” in *Essays on the Sources for Chinese History*, ed. Donald. D. Leslie, Colin Mackerras, and Gungwu. Wang (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1973), 64–70. p.64. The *Zizhi tongjian* also does not have an English translation, for the Chinese version see: 司馬光 Sima Guang, *Zizhi Tongjian*, 資治通鑑 (Beijing: 中華書局, 1956).

<sup>163</sup> Xu, “Historical Development of the Pre-Dynastic Khitan.” p.19.

<sup>164</sup> Standen, “Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources.” p.175.

<sup>165</sup> Zhang, *An Introduction to Chinese History and Culture*. p.373. Puett has picked up on this aspect of Sima’s writing to suggest that we should therefore compare the *Zizhi tongjian* to the ‘Spring and Autumn Annals’ rather than Sima Qian’s ‘Records of the Grand Historian’, with which it is more frequently associated: Puett, “Classical Chinese Historical Thought.” p.44.

projected backwards to create the idea of a ‘northern’ antagonist as a universal threat throughout history.<sup>166</sup> Chen has noted Sima Guang’s acknowledgment and disappointment at the historical dominance of northern peoples such as the Tuoba over their southern counterparts.<sup>167</sup> Strange also demonstrates how Sima Guang used north-south ethnic tensions, as the basis for the fall of the Western Jin (265-316) some seven centuries earlier.<sup>168</sup> If the text was intended as a series of parables for the current Song government, then the message about how they should respond to the Liao dynasty was clear.

As Standen has previously questioned: if the *Zizhi tongjian* was intended to be used in contemporary arguments at court, how does this alter our subsequent reading and use of the text?<sup>169</sup> It is difficult not to read a commentary of mistrust and fear of the Liao (and also the Western Xia) into these accounts, as well as an attempt to define the Song as part of a lasting southern tradition against this northern ‘other’. However, in contrast to his eleventh century contemporary Ouyang Xiu, Sima Guang’s wording in the *Zizhi tongjian* follows closely that of the *Jiu wudaishi*. Standen has noted that certain incidents regarding the Liao in the *Jiu wudaishi* are even expanded upon in the *Zizhi tongjian* creating supplementary material on the dynasty not found elsewhere.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Standen, “Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources.” p.151. It has been noted in a working paper by Liu Pining that this process was not unique to Sima, charting the changing attitudes to the Northern Wei Dynasty amongst various Song scholars: Liu Pining, “Song Scholars’ View on the Northern Wei’s Legitimacy,” 2017.

<sup>167</sup> See: Hilde De Weerd, “Reinventing Chinese Political History,” 2014. p.10. and Sanping Chen, *Multicultural China in the Early Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012). p.2. respectively.

<sup>168</sup> Mark Strange, “An Eleventh-Century View of Chinese Ethnic Policy: Sima Guang on the Fall of Western Jin,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 20, no. 3 (2007): 235–58. pp.235-237.

<sup>169</sup> Standen, “Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources.” p.150.

<sup>170</sup> Standen. p.175.

### 1.2.8. The *Qidan Guozhi* (契丹國志 – Records of the Kitan State):

The *Qidan Guozhi* is the earliest surviving history of the Liao dynasty, believed to have been published in 1247.<sup>171</sup> Unlike the *Liaoshi*, it was an independent history compiled by an individual named Ye Longli. This is a figure about whom we know little, and the ultimate purpose for the history's compilation remains a mystery. Standen describes the author as being thought of as 'notorious for his carelessness' but she points to the value of the many sections of the text that cannot be found in any of the previous or subsequent histories.<sup>172</sup> These include important documents such as the oath letters exchanged at the Treaty of Chanyuan as well as individual biographical material.<sup>173</sup> One interesting change that the *Qidan guozhi* also makes from its source material is that, even when passages are copied from the earlier Song texts, the terminology is changed to make the Liao the legitimate dynasty and possessor of Heaven's mandate during the Five Dynasties period. Previous references to the 'Ruler of the Liao' (*Liaozhu* 遼主) in the *Zizhi tongjian*, become the 'Liao Emperor' (*Liaodi* 遼帝) in the *Qidan guozhi*.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> There is, as yet, no English translation of the text, for the Chinese, see: 葉隆禮 Ye Longli, *Qidan Guozhi*, 契丹國志 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe (上海古籍出版社), 1985). There is actually still some debate as to the date of the text, see: Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.182. With regard to being the earliest history of Liao, even if the incomplete history of the Liao produced under the Jin had survived, the date of 1247 given for the *Qidan guozhi* would still have predated it.

<sup>172</sup> Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.182. The carelessness of the compilation is also seconded by Biran, "Unearthing the Liao Dynasty's Relations with the Muslim World: Migrations, Diplomacy, Commerce, and Mutual Perceptions." p.223.

<sup>173</sup> Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.183.

<sup>174</sup> Standen. p.185.

In the *Qidan guozhi* then, the portrayal of the Liao lends a legitimacy that is not present in either the *Xin wudaishi* or the *Zizhi tongjian* upon which it appears to have been largely based.<sup>175</sup> Despite this, it is the negative image of the Liao as a northern ‘other’, or even as barbarians, from the more prominent texts by Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang that seems to have arrived to us in the present day. This is probably in no small part due to the respect attributed to the two authors of those histories. As we noted in the section on both the *Xin wudaishi* and the *Zizhi tongjian*, these writers have been recognised as leading intellectual lights of their time by later historians. The picture that they generated of the Liao as a constant peripheral threat in a history focussed on the Five Dynasties rather than a political entity in their own right set the precedent for all later Liao scholarship.

#### **1.2.9. After the Liaoshi - secondary material and the continued side-lining of the Liao dynasty:**

After the publication of the *Liaoshi*, the Liao’s historical reputation was further damaged under the Yuan’s successors - the Ming dynasty. The Ming’s official historians completely rewrote the dynastic succession, refusing to acknowledge the historiography of the Yuan court and with it the *Liaoshi*.<sup>176</sup> Despite never officially taking on a dynastic element, Chen has put forward the hypothesis that private documentation and the choice of yellow as an imperial colour suggests that the majority of the Ming court saw the ‘Earth’ element as representing their dynasty.<sup>177</sup> In this way the Ming claimed Heaven’s mandate directly from

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<sup>175</sup> Standen. p.186.

<sup>176</sup> Chan, “Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories.” p.15.

<sup>177</sup> For more on the Ming choice of dynastic element see: Chen, “Legitimation Discourse and the Theory of the Five Elements in Imperial China.” pp.358-360.

the Song, bypassing not only the Liao but also the Jin and Yuan Dynasties as well. With the Liao then firmly removed from the dynastic succession, the positioning of the dynasty in any later histories of China would always be problematic.

The earliest of the twentieth century interest in the Liao came from Japanese scholars around the turn of the century after the Liaodong peninsular (land that was claimed by the Liao in the tenth and eleventh centuries) was ceded to Japan as part of the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895.<sup>178</sup> Rather than the historical record, it was the extant Liao remains of the region that aroused the interests of archaeologists and architectural historians.<sup>179</sup> The most famous of these scholars was Torii Ryuzo who began his field research in the region in 1908 and published on Liao archaeological material for the next three decades.<sup>180</sup> Further expeditions and their subsequent publications such as those by Sekino and Takeshima, Tamura and Yukio, and Shimada provided archaeological materials which created an impetus to explore the Liao polity outside of the historiographical realm.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Further territorial gains came after the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 bringing the Japanese into greater contact with Liao remains in what is now Heilongjiang and Jilin - for more on this period of Japanese history see: J. G. Caiger and R. H. P. Mason, *A History of Japan*, Revised (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1997). p.268-271.

<sup>179</sup> Japanese scholars also had no need to adopt the linear dynastic succession for the purpose of nation building unlike attempts by figures such as Liang Qichao who needed to create a cohesive timeline to present a 'national history' of China, see: Shiqiao Li, "Writing a Modern Chinese Architectural History: Liang Sicheng and Liang Qichao," *Journal of Architectural Education* 56, no. 1 (2002): 34-45.

<sup>180</sup> Dieter Kuhn, "An Introduction to the Chinese Archaeology of the Liao," in *Gilded Splendor: Treasures of China's Liao Empire (907-1125)*, ed. Hsueh-man Shen (New York: Asia Society, 2006), 25-41. p.27. Torii's main work on the Liao can be found in: Ryuzo Torii, *On Liao Culture*, 遼の文化を探る (Tokyo: Shokasha, 1937).

<sup>181</sup> See: Tadashi Sekino and Takuichi Takeshima, *Liao-Jin Architecture and Its Buddhist Sculpture*, 遼金時代の建築と其佛像 (Tokyo: Toho Bunka Gakuin Tokyo Kenkyujo, 1925)., Jitsuzo Tamura and Kobayashi Yukio, *Tombs and Mural Paintings of Ch'ing-Ling: Liao Imperial Mausoleums of Eleventh Century A.D. in Eastern Mongolia* (Kyoto: Kyoto University, 1953). and Masao Shimada, *Research on the Liao*, (遼制の研究) (Tokyo: Nakazawa insatsu kabushiki, 1954).



These developments coincided with the first Chinese and international interest in the architectural remains that the Liao had left behind. In his survey of pre-modern Chinese architecture, Liang Sicheng, a figure viewed by many as the godfather of Chinese architectural history, paid particularly close attention to the Liao.<sup>182</sup> Leading both Chinese and international teams in the 1920s, Liang's surveys covered vast swathes of northern China until they were interrupted by the Japanese occupation of Manchuria after the Mukden incident of 1931.<sup>183</sup> Unfortunately, this marked the end of the early golden era for Liao archaeology by Chinese scholars. Steinhardt writes of how, even now, national tensions have led some Chinese scholars to refuse to use the Japanese research of this period.<sup>184</sup> Equally, post-1945, the Japanese could not continue their own investigations having ceded the territory back to China.

A combination of the various wars of the mid-twentieth century and then the Cultural Revolution, kept Liao archaeology out of the spotlight after 1931 but interest in the dynasty had already been generated amongst historians, both in Asia and further afield. In 1946 this interest led to the publication of what many still consider to be the pre-eminent work of scholarship on the Liao dynasty in any language: Wittfogel and Feng's *History of Chinese Society: Liao (907-1125)*.<sup>185</sup> This text takes the form of an annotated translation (Chinese-

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<sup>182</sup> For more on Liang Sicheng's position in Chinese architectural history see Fairbank's introduction to: 梁思成 Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*, ed. Wilma Fairbank (Beijing: SDK Joint Publishing, 2011)., also Nancy Steinhardt, "Chinese Architectural History in the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73, no. 1 (2014): 38–60. pp.40-42 and Li, "Writing a Modern Chinese Architectural History: Liang Sicheng and Liang Qichao."

<sup>183</sup> See: Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. as well as the publications of Ecke who accompanied him on some of these surveys: Gustav Ecke, "Structural Features of the Stone Built T'ing-Pagoda: A Preliminary Study," *Monumenta Serica* 1, no. 2 (1935): 253–76. and Gustav Ecke, "Structural Features of the Stone Built Ting Pagoda, A Preliminary Study - Chapter II: Brick Pagodas in the Liao Style," *Monumenta Serica* 13 (1948): 331–65.

<sup>184</sup> Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.25.

<sup>185</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. For those that have mentioned it as remaining the foremost text on the subject of the Liao see: Hansen and Louis, "Introduction, Part 1: Evolving

English) of large portions of the *Liaoshi*, organised thematically and with extensive notes for each section. The authors explain that they chose to focus on the *Liaoshi* as it remained the most comprehensive source available to them and that, as an early pioneering study, they could not hope to cover in detail the materials in all the histories pertaining to the Liao that we discussed above (the text already extends to 752 pages).<sup>186</sup> The fact that Wittfogel and Feng's work is still the benchmark for Liao dynasty scholarship is both a credit to the quality of the authors' research and an indictment of the state of the field in the second half of the twentieth century when interest in the dynasty once again dwindled.

Many key figures in the field of Liao history and archaeology today, such as Hansen, Standen and Steinhardt, have all commented on the dearth of research on Liao dynasty topics during this period.<sup>187</sup> Standen, in particular, has noted that the number of European language monographs on the Liao can still be counted on one hand. Even in those studies that do exist, the Liao normally function as a northern 'other' lined up against the Song dynasty - a binary opposite to their southern counterparts.<sup>188</sup> These binaries have taken many forms: northern-southern, nomadic-sedentary, barbarian-civilised, Chinese-foreign – and often feature a combination of these different factors to generate a portrait of irreconcilable difference between Liao and Song.<sup>189</sup> This 'othering' of the Liao is, at least in part, a reflection of the

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Approaches to the Study of the Liao." p.3. Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.153. and Kuhn, "An Introduction to the Chinese Archaeology of the Liao." p.26.

<sup>186</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.28.

<sup>187</sup> Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.154., Hansen and Louis, "Introduction, Part 1: Evolving Approaches to the Study of the Liao." p.3. and Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.25.

<sup>188</sup> Standen, "Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources." p.154.

<sup>189</sup> This has been noted by: Yang, "Reinventing the Barbarian: Rhetorical and Philosophical Uses of the Yi-Di in Mid-Imperial China, 600-1300." p.xiv. and Gwen Bennett and Naomi Standen, "Historical and Archaeological Views of the Liao (10th to 12th Centuries) Borderlands in Northeast China," in *Places in Between: The*

portrayal of the Liao in the histories of figures such as Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang in the eleventh century. A problem that we regularly witness in Chinese historical study is a lack of critique with regard to well respected historical texts, this has been known to lead scholars to – sometimes even unconsciously – take on the attitudes and prejudices of their authors.<sup>190</sup> This is in no way limited to scholars from China either, with both Chin and Barfield noting that historians of China from other areas have frequently immersed themselves in the discipline and its classical literature to the point of taking on an ingrained sinocentric perspective.<sup>191</sup>

How have these binary perspectives affected our understanding of the Liao? Firstly, we will observe their classification as nomads in opposition to the sedentary state of the Song. Classification as a ‘nomadic’, or even ‘semi-nomadic’, group has wide reaching semantic associations, both specifically in Chinese history and Eurasian history more generally. Other than the sometimes romanticised notions of the freedom this lifeway can provide, most of these associations are not positive.<sup>192</sup> In an article trying to identify common themes between China, the Middle East and Europe from the second to eleventh centuries, it was the threat of steppe-based nomads to sedentary culture that Knapp identified as being the primary focus uniting each of these three areas.<sup>193</sup> Whether we agree with this hypothesis or not, there has

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*Archaeology of Social, Cultural and Geographical Borders and Borderlands*, ed. David. Mullin (London: Oxbow Books, 2011). p.82. among others.

<sup>190</sup> Birge, “Rock, Paper, Scissors: The Nature of Local Sources and Understanding Regional History in Imperial China.” p.6.

<sup>191</sup> Tamara Chin, “Antiquarian as Ethnographer: Han Ethnicity in Early China Studies,” in *Critical Han Studies: The History, Representation, and Identity of China’s Majority*, ed. Thomas Mullaney et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 128–46. p.130. and Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China*. p.4.

<sup>192</sup> This sort of romanticised notion of the free and independent nomad can still be found in modern histories of China such as: Fairbank and Goldman, *China: A New History*. p.23.

<sup>193</sup> Keith Knapp, “Did the Middle Kingdom Have a Middle Period? The Problem of ‘Medieval’ in China’s History,” *Education About Asia* 12, no. 2 (2007). p.13.

certainly been an entrenched position in academic work across all of these regions (and discussing a range of periods), that nomadic groups represent the antithesis of a sedentary and ‘civilised’ society.<sup>194</sup>

In the case of Chinese history, nomadic and semi-nomadic groups are consistently labelled as being outside the ‘Chinese’ cultural sphere – pariahs who can only become a part of the sedentary world through an extensive process of acculturation.<sup>195</sup> The Great Wall looms large in these ideas, providing a conceptual boundary between steppe and sown in the minds of historians, regardless of its actual physical presence (or lack thereof) at the time.<sup>196</sup> Because we frequently do not have histories written by these nomadic groups, we instead rely on the formulaic way in which they have been presented in Chinese language historical texts. It is therefore easy to witness these nomadic groups as nothing more than unchanging entities on the northern border of a diverse and ever changing political landscape in the sedentary centres where these texts were produced.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Honeychurch covers the extent of this problem in: William Honeychurch, “Alternative Complexities: The Archaeology of Pastoral Nomadic States,” *Journal of Archaeological Research* 22 (2014): 277–326. pp.277–278.

<sup>195</sup> Nicola Di Cosmo, “China-Steppe Relations in Historical Perspective,” in *Complexity of Interaction Along the Eurasian Steppe Zone in the First Millenium CE*, ed. Jan. Bemmman and Michael. Schmauder (Bonn: Bonn University, 2015). p.68.

<sup>196</sup> Despite the massive progress made in their work in moving the discussion forward regarding nomadic groups in what is now China, Barfield and Di Cosmo still both represent the Great Wall as both a conceptual and literal linear boundary between two (sometimes diametrically) opposing cultural norms – see: Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China*. p.16. and Di Cosmo, “China-Steppe Relations in Historical Perspective.” p.50. For the actual condition and existence of the ‘Great Wall’ in the Liao period see: Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.7. and for more on the concept of the Great Wall as a figurative rather than literal boundary see Nicolas Tackett, “The Great Wall and Conceptualizations of the Border Under the Northern Song,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 38 (2008): 99–138. p.100.

<sup>197</sup> Naomi Standen and Gwen Bennett, “Tearing Down the Great Wall: The Evidence from Post-Han Black Wares,” in *Perspectives on the Liao* (New Haven: Bard Graduate Centre, 2010). p.85.

Di Cosmo has commented on the tendency in Chinese language history to ‘classicise’ accounts of nomadic groups, staying faithful to archetypal descriptions and creating lasting stereotypes.<sup>198</sup> Barfield follows up on this line of thought, stating that repeated motifs of nomadic inferiority, such as nomadic groups being forced to ‘pay tribute’ to sedentary states, are uncritically perpetuated in modern scholarship despite what the author describes as the ‘transparent biases’ of the original material.<sup>199</sup> In this way, a description - taken from the *Jiang Yuan* (將苑), a text attributed to Zhuge Liang (181-234) and originally intended to describe the Xiongnu of the Warring States period - can be copied verbatim and applied to the Liao of the tenth century with no desire on the part of either the author or audience to update the details to fit the contemporary situation.<sup>200</sup> As a result, Psarras has noted that nomadic pastoralists such as the Xiongnu were, at least until the 1980s, identified as identical to other contemporary and even subsequent nomadic groups despite archaeological evidence demonstrating the distinct differences in their material remains.<sup>201</sup> This adherence to the textual, rather than archaeological, record for nomadic groups who were generally in political opposition to those writing the texts is problematic for a variety of reasons.

In the surviving textual record, the only way nomadic groups were seen to be capable of change was through the influence of their sedentary peers and acculturation towards that way

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<sup>198</sup> Di Cosmo, “China-Steppe Relations in Historical Perspective.” p.53.

<sup>199</sup> Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China*. p.4.

<sup>200</sup> For more on the formulaic use of this text and the descriptions applied to ‘northerners’ in the Chinese language historical tradition not just by the Song but also by historians in the Xixia as well, see: Imre Galambos, “The Northern Neighbors of the Tangut,” *Cahiers de Linguistique - Asie Orientale* 40, no. 1 (2011): 73–108. pp.78-83.

<sup>201</sup> Sophia-karin Psarras, “Han and Xiongnu: A Reexamination of Cultural and Political Relations,” *Monumenta Serica* 51 (2003): 55–236. p.68.

of life.<sup>202</sup> Successive generations of major figures in the field of Inner Asian studies such as Lattimore, Khazanov, Barfield and Di Cosmo have attempted to rectify this trend, observing the interaction between nomadic and sedentary groups and proposing alternatives to the traditional acculturation model.<sup>203</sup> Despite this, we still see a combination of economic and environmental determinism coming through in these works. There remains an overriding impression that nomadic groups, and particularly nomadic states, could not exist without the presence of nearby stable sedentary communities.<sup>204</sup>

When this concept of a need for the sedentary world is combined with a textual record exclusively from said sedentary communities, it creates an environment in which the agency granted to nomads in historical and archaeological research is significantly reduced.<sup>205</sup> One by-product of this viewpoint is that nomadic groups have often been viewed as reactive - responding to changes in the sedentary world rather than initiating action themselves.<sup>206</sup> This trend has led to the creation of timelines in which the entire rise and fall of nomadic states is directly related to the rise and fall of their sedentary contemporaries.<sup>207</sup> For the Liao period then, whereas the decisions made by the sedentary Song court are most frequently recognised

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<sup>202</sup> Bryan Miller, "The Southern Xiongnu in Northern China: Navigating and Negotiating the Middle Ground," in *Complexity of Interaction Along the Eurasian Steppe Zone in the First Millenium CE*, ed. Jan Bemann (Bonn: Bonn University, 2015), 127–98. p.155.

<sup>203</sup> See: Owen Lattimore, "Return to China's Northern Frontier," *The Geographical Journal* 139, no. 2 (1973): 233–42. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China.*, Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History*. Di Cosmo, "China-Steppe Relations in Historical Perspective."

<sup>204</sup> Khazanov has noted that environmental factors and unbalanced economy led to nomadic states being forced to either appropriate supplies from sedentary neighbours or conquer and tax them in order to ensure their survival, see: A. M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984). This approach can be seen to continue and be adapted in the works of: Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History*. p.1095. and Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China*. p.2. among others.

<sup>205</sup> Peter Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005). pp.15–16.

<sup>206</sup> William Honeychurch, "The Nomad as State Builder: Historical Theory and Material Evidence from Mongolia," *Journal of World Prehistory* 26 (2013): 283–321. p.284.

<sup>207</sup> Di Cosmo, "China-Steppe Relations in Historical Perspective." p.53.

to have a well thought out political motivation, those made by the semi-nomadic Liao court can – and frequently have - been attributed instead to either a direct reaction to the Song court or to some base need.<sup>208</sup>

Despite nomadic groups still lacking a degree of historical agency in recent scholarship, the increased interest in the study of Inner-Asian nomadic groups since the 1980s has successfully started to shift the narrative away from the idea of a uni-directional acculturation model. What we now witness more frequently are post-colonial concepts of hybridisation and creolisation in the sedentary-nomadic border regions, particularly with regard to the interaction between the Xiongnu and the Han upon which the majority of the research has thus far been focussed.<sup>209</sup> Miller has recently suggested that we should now begin to take these concepts a step further. Rather than seeing the border regions as hybrid cultures between two dichotomous ‘others’, Miller instead states that we should ‘allow for the interweaving of cultural and social regimes in certain borderland contexts without the blurring of distinctions or the blending of elements into new constructs.’<sup>210</sup>

Unfortunately, these developments in the study of earlier periods do not yet seem to have filtered fully through to the study of the interaction between Liao and Song. The Liao are still most frequently placed as a nomadic opposite to a sedentary Song norm.<sup>211</sup> Standen notes that

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<sup>208</sup> See, for example the coverage of the ‘Mid Century Crisis’ and particularly the portrayal of the Liao response to Song-Xia relations in: Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China: Sung’s Foreign Relations with Kitan Liao*. pp.205-6.

<sup>209</sup> For Han-Xiongnu interaction and the development of hybrid culture see particularly: Psarras, “Han and Xiongnu: A Reexamination of Cultural and Political Relations.” And Honeychurch, “The Nomad as State Builder: Historical Theory and Material Evidence from Mongolia.”

<sup>210</sup> Miller, “The Southern Xiongnu in Northern China: Navigating and Negotiating the Middle Ground.” p.155.

<sup>211</sup> See the (brief) sections on the Liao in the two recent histories of China that we discussed earlier in this Chapter for some examples: Fairbank and Goldman, *China: A New History*. and Rossabi, *A History of China*.

this is reflected in the fact that the term ‘Kitan’ is often used interchangeably with ‘Liao’, demonstrating that, in the mind of certain authors, the political entity of the Liao state can be reduced to its ethnic origins with a nomadic group - along with all of the semantic baggage associated with that term.<sup>212</sup> In a separate study, Bennett and Standen inform us of how museum exhibits of Liao material across northern China depict the Liao as stereotypical nomads. Large scale dioramas of horses, tents, armour and weapons, feature none of the hoes, spades or ploughs that would have been necessary to the mixed agricultural and pastoral economy that archaeological survey has demonstrated to have made up the Liao polity.<sup>213</sup> Although the extent to which the Kitan could be classified as a purely nomadic group has frequently been called into question (especially during the Liao period), their image as a group comprised entirely of nomadic warriors still persists.<sup>214</sup> Standen and Bennett have previously demonstrated where the final calling point for this train of logic often ends up: it does not take many steps to get from the Liao being identified as nomads, to accounts of nomads raiding, to concepts that nomads have to raid and, finally, that nomads (and by extension the Liao) are by nature rapacious.<sup>215</sup>

This image of the Liao as rapacious nomads ties in to another one of the most frequently cited binaries placing the Liao in opposition to the Song: the idea that the Liao represent uncivilised barbarians to the Song’s civilised and cultural world.<sup>216</sup> Bennett and Standen have

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<sup>212</sup> Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty: Frontier Crossings in Liao China*. p.9.

<sup>213</sup> Bennett and Standen, “Historical and Archaeological Views of the Liao (10th to 12th Centuries) Borderlands in Northeast China.” p.80.

<sup>214</sup> See: Bennett and Standen. p.85, Lin, “Perceptions of Liao Urban Landscapes: Political Practices and Nomadic Empires.” p.223.

<sup>215</sup> Bennett and Standen, “Historical and Archaeological Views of the Liao (10th to 12th Centuries) Borderlands in Northeast China.” p.85.

<sup>216</sup> For more on the Chinese words that have come to be translated as ‘barbarian’, see: Yang, “Reinventing the Barbarian: Rhetorical and Philosophical Uses of the Yi-Di in Mid-Imperial China, 600-1300.” pp.xi-xix.



pointed out that older scholarship frequently discusses the ‘barbarisation’ of North East Asia under groups such as the Liao.<sup>217</sup> This has manifested itself in many ways: we frequently witness negative assumptions from scholars about both the Kitan and the Liao. These range from the blatant statements of Gustav Ecke in the 1930s referring to their frequent ‘Tung-Hu orgies’, through to the subtler but equally damaging claims of more recent works. These include examples such as Mote’s supposition that, as a nomadic group, the Liao could only have developed their state through the work of ‘partially sinified intermediaries’, or the suggestion by Ledderose (among others) that the non-Kitan majority in the Liao polity possessed ‘evident cultural superiority’ over their Kitan rulers.<sup>218</sup> These assumptions come through in assessments of archaeological and material remains as well, with Louis noting that the classification of gold and silverware as ‘Liao’ has often been simply because they look ‘rustic’, ‘crude’ or ‘ethnic’ rather than due to any distinct typological features.<sup>219</sup>

Strange has commented on the use of the term ‘barbarian’ in English to describe the Liao as taking on much of its original Hellenic significance in this context, as it is used specifically to create opposition to a cultural norm.<sup>220</sup> For the Greeks that norm was to be a citizen of the *polis* but the question remains of what the cultural construct is against which the Liao are currently being judged as barbarous? This leads us to the most challenging dichotomy of all,

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<sup>217</sup> Bennett and Standen, “Historical and Archaeological Views of the Liao (10th to 12th Centuries) Borderlands in Northeast China.” p.83.

<sup>218</sup> See respectively: Ecke, “Structural Features of the Stone Built Ting Pagoda, A Preliminary Study - Chapter II: Brick Pagodas in the Liao Style.” p.334, Mote, *Imperial China: 900-1800*. p.77 and Lothar Ledderose, “Make Sutras, Not War: The Stele of 965/1005AD at Cloud Dwelling Monastery,” in *Perspectives on the Liao* (New Haven: Bard Graduate Centre, 2010). p.161.

<sup>219</sup> Louis, “Shaping Symbols of Privilege: Precious Metals and the Early Liao Aristocracy.” p.78. For a similar case of misattribution, Biran has noted that Liao porcelain is frequently ascribed to being ‘Chinese’, see: Biran, “Unearthing the Liao Dynasty’s Relations with the Muslim World: Migrations, Diplomacy, Commerce, and Mutual Perceptions.” p.241.

<sup>220</sup> Strange, “An Eleventh-Century View of Chinese Ethnic Policy: Sima Guang on the Fall of Western Jin.” p.237.

the umbrella under which all of these other binary oppositions can thrive – that, unlike the Song, the Liao are not considered to be ‘Chinese’.<sup>221</sup> If scholarship is placing the Liao in direct opposition to a distinct ‘Chinese’ ideal, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Liao dynasty does not readily feature in histories of ‘China’ as a nation. It becomes even less surprising when they are consistently compared to a contemporary dynasty that is seen to meet all the prerequisites of that description. The question remains though of what those prerequisites are and why exactly the Liao as a dynasty did not meet them?

If we are to start out with the basic assumption that the Liao are not a ‘Chinese’ dynasty then it naturally follows that those traits and qualities found in the Liao state - from political developments to architecture - that are seen to be ‘Chinese’ in origin will automatically be attributed to the Liao becoming acculturated to ‘Chinese’ values.<sup>222</sup> This process is normally referred to as ‘sinification’ or ‘sinicisation’. Over time, critiques of this acculturation model have led to concepts of hybridity between the Liao and their ‘Chinese’ neighbours becoming more popular.<sup>223</sup> More recently there have even been attempts to redress the balance in the Liao’s favour. Crossley, for example has explored the ‘Kitanisation’ of some aspects of ‘Chinese’ culture in the Liao-Song border region.<sup>224</sup> However, as Di Cosmo suggests, the preconceptions of ‘Chinese’ vs ‘non-Chinese’ groups run deep, and any discussion of cultural contact between Liao and Song can still only be written ‘with great difficulty’.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> The Liao dynasty is currently usually classed as an ‘alien regime’ in the majority of modern scholarship on the history of China, this is most clearly demonstrated in their inclusion in Vol 6 of the Cambridge History of China: Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*.

<sup>222</sup> Examples of this can be found across the corpus of Liao dynasty scholarship from 1946: Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. to 2006 with: Kuhn, “An Introduction to the Chinese Archaeology of the Liao.”

<sup>223</sup> For a summary of arguments against the ‘sinification’ narrative, see: Naomi Standen, *Demystifying China* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013). pp.32-3.

<sup>224</sup> Crossley, “Outside In: Power, Identity, and the Han Lineage of Jizhou.” p.81.

<sup>225</sup> Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History*. p.3.

The net result of this is that the majority of Liao scholarship now features heated debates about the extent of Liao acculturation to ‘Chinese’ values.<sup>226</sup> Everything from political organisation to tomb architecture has previously been scoured for evidence of ‘Chinese’ influence (or a lack thereof). Of particular note here is the discussion, played out over a series of articles and a number of years, between Kuhn and Steinhardt about the degree to which Liao architecture should be considered ‘Chinese’.<sup>227</sup> Whereas Steinhardt argues for a Liao architectural tradition that eventually became something unique and distinct from that of ‘China’, Kuhn argues that the Liao tradition must be seen as a part of the pre-existing ‘Chinese’ tradition (as well as being devised and constructed by ‘Chinese’ builders).<sup>228</sup> This is a debate on which the two authors are never likely to come to an agreement, not only because of the entrenched positions taken up on either side of the debate, but also because they start from the fundamental misconception that ‘Chineseness’ is an objective, unchanging measure against which the Liao can be compared.<sup>229</sup>

For the Liao acculturation debate to have heuristic value, one would first have to establish what it is that is signified by the term ‘Chinese’ in the context of the Liao period of the tenth and eleventh centuries. The terms we normally translate as ‘China’, *Zhongguo* (中國), and

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<sup>226</sup> This tendency goes right back to Wittfogel and Feng, see: Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*, p.19.

<sup>227</sup> For this debate in full, see (in chronological order): Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*., Kuhn, “‘Liao Architecture’: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?” and Nancy Steinhardt, “A Response to Dieter Kuhn, ‘Liao Architecture: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?’,” *T’oung Pao* 87, no. 4/5 (2001): 456–62.

<sup>228</sup> See respectively: Steinhardt, “A Response to Dieter Kuhn, ‘Liao Architecture: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?’” p.62. and Kuhn, “‘Liao Architecture’: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?” p.332.

<sup>229</sup> This misconception is mentioned in: Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History*, p.7.

‘Chinese’, *Zhongguoren* (中國人) or *Hanren/Hanzu* (漢人/漢族) have only achieved their current meanings since the nineteenth century.<sup>230</sup> Any discussion of ‘China’ and ‘Chineseness’ before this period, therefore, brings with it a whole raft of unknowns that need to be established: from geography, to ethnicity, to linguistics.<sup>231</sup>

#### 1.2.10. The Liao and concepts of ‘China’:

It is in no way the intention of this study to provide a definitive answer as to whether the Liao as a dynasty should be considered ‘Chinese’. Equally, it does not seek to accurately define what the term ‘Chinese’ means in the Liao period. Instead, the aim is to demonstrate that the concept of ‘Chineseness’ against which the Liao are often compared is extremely difficult to identify with any degree of accuracy.

When we discuss ‘China’ in a historical context, the term provides clear images in the mind of a unique civilisation of Great Walls, Confucian scholars, terracotta armies and, perhaps most importantly, the longest continuous cultural tradition in the world. Textbooks and travel guides will often propose that China has had no less than five thousand years of history as a sovereign nation.<sup>232</sup> The concept of this continuous cultural history was heavily promoted by the nationalist government after 1912 with both Sun Yatsen and Chiang Kaishek said to have

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<sup>230</sup> For more on the history of the adoption of this terminology see respectively: Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual* (London: Harvard University Press, 2000). p.132. and Chin, “Antiquarian as Ethnographer: Han Ethnicity in Early China Studies.” p.133.

<sup>231</sup> Mark Elliott, “Hushuo: The Northern Other and the Naming of the Han Chinese,” in *Critical Han Studies: The History, Representation, and Identity of China’s Majority*, ed. Thomas Mullaney et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 173–90. p.173.

<sup>232</sup> De Weerd, “Reinventing Chinese Political History.” p.10.

been enthusiastic proponents.<sup>233</sup> To say that the Hongshan culture (fifth-third millennium BCE), or even the Xia dynasty (c.2070-c.1600 BCE), are the direct antecedents of the twenty-first century nation of China today though, has no more verifiable authenticity than claiming a similar link between present day Iraq and the Akkadian Empire (c.2334-c.2154BCE).<sup>234</sup> Both regions developed written scripts in around the same period and both have had continuous human occupation ever since.<sup>235</sup> However, the heavily curated dynastic succession that we discussed earlier in this chapter has created an undeniable sense of continuity since at least the second century BCE – regardless of its accuracy portraying the actual historical circumstances.<sup>236</sup>

Despite this apparent continuity, there was no term for China as a ‘nation’ prior to the nineteenth century. The concept of a ‘Mandate of Heaven’ for ruling an empire comprising ‘All Under Heaven’ rendered the idea of the ‘nation’ as we envisage it in a present-day academic context all but irrelevant.<sup>237</sup> During the dynastic period, the name of the ‘state’ simply followed that of the dynasty currently in power, thus we have the ‘Qing State’ for the period 1644-1912 or the ‘Ming State’ for 1369-1644.<sup>238</sup> Even today, the Chinese language does not distinguish between ‘nation’ and ‘state’, using the same character: *guo* (國), as a translation for both English terms.<sup>239</sup> This is not to say that the China of today is not viewed as a nation (either within China or internationally) or that it has not undergone its own nation

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<sup>233</sup> Peter Perdue, “The Chinese,” in *Demystifying China* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013). p.15.

<sup>234</sup> For an assessment of Mu Hongli’s claims about the Hongshan culture proving a direct cultural precedent to the ‘central plains’ region see: Margaret Sleeboom, *Academic Nations in China and Japan* (London: Routledge, 2004). p.33.

<sup>235</sup> Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*. p.21.

<sup>236</sup> Standen, *Demystifying China*. p.3.

<sup>237</sup> Li, “Writing a Modern Chinese Architectural History: Liang Sicheng and Liang Qichao.” p.42.

<sup>238</sup> Sleeboom, *Academic Nations in China and Japan*.p.32.

<sup>239</sup> Sleeboom. p.5. Although ‘nation’ is also sometimes translated as *minzu* (民族) this has more of an ethnic connotation than the geographical or political implication of ‘nation’ in English.

building process. The early twentieth century saw reformers such as Liang Qichao wholeheartedly embrace the idea of ‘China’ as a single nation within a global international community.<sup>240</sup> A major part of this process was the projection of the idea of the nation of ‘China’, along with its associated culture and people, backwards through history. Whether these twentieth century conceptions of ‘China’ were relevant to the Liao period is a question that still needs to be discussed.

Hobsbawn once remarked that: ‘History is the raw material for nationalist ideologies, as poppies are the raw material for heroin addiction’.<sup>241</sup> This sentiment seems to have manifested itself in the figure of Liang Qichao (1873-1929), who saw the creation of a national history of China as ‘the most urgent task’ in Chinese scholarship of the early twentieth century.<sup>242</sup> Liang Qichao stated that the purpose of such a history would be to ‘see China as a nation, with its own past, its characteristics, and its position in relation to humanity as a whole’.<sup>243</sup> Unfortunately, the Liao found themselves on the wrong side of this nation building process. In the attempt to embrace a sense of historical continuity for the Chinese nation, the accepted dynastic succession of the Yuan and then the Ming courts that we discussed earlier in this chapter became increasingly canonised as a ‘Chinese’ national history.

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<sup>240</sup> For more on Liang Qichao and his work on China as a ‘nation’, see: Li, “Writing a Modern Chinese Architectural History: Liang Sicheng and Liang Qichao.” And Sleeboom, *Academic Nations in China and Japan*. pp.32-33.

<sup>241</sup> Quoted in: Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia*. p.18.

<sup>242</sup> Li, “Writing a Modern Chinese Architectural History: Liang Sicheng and Liang Qichao.” p.41.

<sup>243</sup> Translations from: Li. p.41.

This reliance on a textual record that had favoured the Song over the Liao left little room for the Liao as a part of ‘China’.<sup>244</sup> As such, not only were the Liao considered not ‘Chinese’, but their opposition to the Song meant that they represented something that concepts of ‘China’ could actually be defined against. Many scholars exploring the field of nationalism and nationalist ideologies have reasoned that national identities are usually formed through emphasising difference to other groups as much as they are through that nations own distinctive characteristics.<sup>245</sup> This gave rise to many of the binaries we have just discussed, and the essentialised notion of the Liao as a non-Chinese dynasty.

If we project the national borders of present day China back into the tenth-twelfth centuries, however, we would find that the vast majority of land claimed by the Liao would fall within it.<sup>246</sup> In this sense the Liao are a ‘Chinese’ dynasty just as much as the Song, and yet the majority of the secondary materials on the dynasty discuss a distinct boundary between the Liao and ‘China’. We hear of migrants crossing the Liao border into ‘China’, or descriptions of the lands claimed by the Song during the Liao period as the Chinese ‘heartlands’ or ‘China proper’.<sup>247</sup> The location and geographical extent of ‘China proper’ though are never clearly defined and would surely have had to change significantly depending on the geographical extent of the currently accepted dynasty in China’s national dynastic succession. The ‘China’ of the Han dynasty bears little geographical resemblance to that of the Tang, Jin or Yuan, it is

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<sup>244</sup> Standen, “Integration and Separation: The Framing of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Chinese Sources.” p.148.

<sup>245</sup> See for example: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). p.3. and Ania Loomba, *New Critical Idiom: Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998). p.104.

<sup>246</sup> The remainder being in Mongolia as well as possibly parts of Russia and North Korea.

<sup>247</sup> For examples, see respectively: Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China*. p.75., Lin, “Perceptions of Liao Urban Landscapes: Political Practices and Nomadic Empires.” p.223. and Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.11.

only the terminology that remains constant.<sup>248</sup> The Song dynasty lands, claimed to be the Chinese heartlands during the Liao period, even manage to shift south after the Jin conquest of most of the northern regions.<sup>249</sup>

Knapp has noted that, even without the filter of twentieth century Chinese nationalism, the founders of dynasties, no matter how small or short lived, would proclaim themselves as universal rulers. Whether based in the north or south of what is now China these dynasties could equally send military expeditions to recover ‘lost’ territory from each other that they believed should have comprised part of their own universal empire.<sup>250</sup> China as a historical geographical entity is therefore almost impossible to define. This is before we even begin to consider the application of modern concepts such as linear borders being placed on a past where they likely did not exist.<sup>251</sup> Recent work by Standen and Skaiff has demonstrated that there existed an extensive liminal zone between Liao and Song rather than the nice clean lines demarcating the border that one might find on maps displaying the two dynasties in their contemporary geographical context (such as the one in Fig. 1.1).<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Some would argue that the area around the Yellow River often referred to as the ‘Central Plains’ represents a consistently ‘Chinese’ region, although it should be noted that the Southern Song were not seen to lose their legitimacy after these lands were taken by the Jin, see: Yang, “Reinventing the Barbarian: Rhetorical and Philosophical Uses of the Yi-Di in Mid-Imperial China, 600-1300.” p.30.

<sup>249</sup> Standen, *Demystifying China*. p.3.

<sup>250</sup> Knapp, “Did the Middle Kingdom Have a Middle Period? The Problem of ‘Medieval’ in China’s History.” p.10.

<sup>251</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.7.

<sup>252</sup> See: Jonathan Karam Skaiff, “Survival in the Frontier Zone: Comparative Perspectives on Identity and Political Allegiance in China’s Inner Asian Borderlands during the Sui-Tang Dynastic Transition (617-630),” *Journal of World History* 15, no. 2 (2004): 117–53. And Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty: Frontier Crossings in Liao China*. Introduction. Standen does note, however, that the border did become increasingly formalised in the eleventh century.



As Cohen has demonstrated, it is important here to recognise the difference between literal and abstract borders.<sup>253</sup> If we cannot define China in the Liao period by its actual geographic extent, then perhaps it can be defined as the place where people with a shared ‘Chinese’ ethnicity or culture primarily exist. Like ‘nation’, the term ‘ethnicity’ also did not have an equivalent in Chinese until relatively recently.<sup>254</sup> *Minzu* (民族), the term primarily translated as ‘ethnicity’ or ‘ethnic group’ possesses a semantic range that also allows it to be translated variously as ‘nation’, ‘people’ or ‘race’ meaning that any discussion of ethnicity in a Chinese context runs the risk of taking on these other associations.<sup>255</sup> The term most commonly associated with the concept of Chinese ethnicity: *Han* (漢) – as well as its variants *Hanren* (漢人), and *Hanzu* (漢族) – therefore become a minefield of potential conflated topics in any given discussion.<sup>256</sup>

The concept of ‘ethnicity’ has always been a challenge to define and the term only entered the Oxford English Dictionary as late as 1955. Although the concept of ‘ethnic groups’ had already been around for about a century prior to this point, this terminology also did not come into widespread usage until the mid-twentieth century.<sup>257</sup> Van der Pijl informs us that the concept of ethnicity was originally developed to ‘capture the common element that runs through specific terms such as ‘people’, ‘nation’, ‘national grouping’, and ‘tribe’, in a multi ethnic society like the USSR.<sup>258</sup> As a concept then, ‘ethnicity’ has the potential to be a useful

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<sup>253</sup> Anthony P Cohen, ed., *Signifying Identities: Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values* (London: Routledge, 2000). p.18.

<sup>254</sup> Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*. p.708.

<sup>255</sup> Sleebloom, *Academic Nations in China and Japan*. p.33.

<sup>256</sup> Elliott, “Hushuo: The Northern Other and the Naming of the Han Chinese.” p.173. For more on the concept of Han ethnicity, see the collected essays in the volume: Thomas S. Mullaney et al., eds., *Critical Han Studies: The History, Representation, and Identity of China’s Majority* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

<sup>257</sup> Elliott, “Hushuo: The Northern Other and the Naming of the Han Chinese.” p.312.

<sup>258</sup> Kees Van Der Pijl, *Nomads, Empires, States: Modes of Foreign Relations and Political Economy, Volume I* (London: Pluto Press, 2007). p.4.

heuristic tool to aid us in navigating through the complex webs of interaction in the Liao period. In practice though, the dominance of the 'Han Chinese' narrative has made the intricacies of studies of ethnicity in China difficult to access.<sup>259</sup>

Today the term 'Han' has come to represent the majority of the population in China leading to claims that it is 'the largest ethnic group on earth'.<sup>260</sup> The concept of the Han ethnicity and the nation of China have become so intertwined that the two terms can be used as synonyms in a variety of circumstances.<sup>261</sup> To call all of the individuals covered by the term 'Han' a single ethnic group remains a little tenuous though. Wilkinson points to genetic studies that demonstrate that the 'Han' of northern China are more closely related to individuals of other ethnicities in neighbouring countries than they are to their 'Han' counterparts in the south of the country.<sup>262</sup> Equally, the 'Han' ethnicity encompasses eight separate speech communities: Guan, Wu, Yue, Xiang, Hakka, Gan, Southern Min and Northern Min. Although these are often referred to as 'dialects', many are mutually unintelligible, leading Mullaney to conclude that, if they were placed in a European context, they would each be classed as separate languages.<sup>263</sup> If either genetics or language are considered to be an important constituent of an ethnic identity, then the term 'Han' appears to describe a group significantly beyond its remit.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Elliott, "Hushuo: The Northern Other and the Naming of the Han Chinese." p.173.

<sup>260</sup> Elliott. p.175.

<sup>261</sup> Elliott. p.173.

<sup>262</sup> Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*. p.709.

<sup>263</sup> Mullaney et al., *Crit. Han Stud. Hist. Represent. Identity China's Major*. p.2.

<sup>264</sup> As they are listed in the Ethnicity series of the 'Oxford Readers' series, see: John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith, *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). pp.24-5.

The synonymous nature of the terms ‘Chinese’ and ‘Han’ in modern discourse has sometimes led to people in the past who are considered to be ‘Chinese’ being labelled as ‘Han’, as well as many of those originally labelled as ‘Han’ in a historical context retroactively being labelled as ‘Chinese’. Given the struggle to define the term ‘Han’ in the present, its use in earlier periods is therefore also likely to be fraught with inconsistencies. Ethnicity and ethnic identity are never bounded constants, they constantly evolve and change.<sup>265</sup> Someone ascribed as having ‘Han’ ethnicity in the present day would likely feel they have less sense of common culture with a ‘Han’ individual of the first century for example than they would with a contemporary individual from any other ethnic group brought up in the current global digital age of smartphones and high-speed internet.

The term ‘Han’ finds its origin in the name of the Han dynasty (206BCE-221CE), and *Hanren* simply meant a person that served under the Han dynasty. Elliott and Yang are in agreement that the term did not take on the connotations of an ethnic identifier until the fifth or sixth century under the Northern Wei dynasty when it was used to identify a specific group within the Wei polity.<sup>266</sup> By the end of the Northern Dynasties period, Yang informs us that ‘Han’ had at least three meanings: the historical polity of the Han dynasty, an ethnic group, or simply a man.<sup>267</sup> By the time of the Liao, the meaning had shifted once again. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, ‘Han’ primarily referred to either individuals from the Sixteen Prefectures

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<sup>265</sup> Van Der Pijl, *Nomads, Empires, States: Modes of Foreign Relations and Political Economy, Volume I*. p.6.

<sup>266</sup> Yang, “Reinventing the Barbarian: Rhetorical and Philosophical Uses of the Yi-Di in Mid-Imperial China, 600-1300.” p.15. and Elliott, “Hushuo: The Northern Other and the Naming of the Han Chinese.” p.174.

<sup>267</sup> Yang, “Reinventing the Barbarian: Rhetorical and Philosophical Uses of the Yi-Di in Mid-Imperial China, 600-1300.” p.16.

that served under the Liao, or figures captured from the Song who worked within the Liao polity.<sup>268</sup>

Identification as Han or Kitan though does not seem to have represented any irreconcilable difference, nor does there seem to have been a sense of ethnically based loyalty in the Liao polity.<sup>269</sup> One example of this can be seen in the fact that, other than the emperors of the Liao dynasty themselves, only four individuals were given the honour of establishing their own ordo. Of this privileged few, three were members of the imperial family but the fourth was classified as ‘Han’, demonstrating that the Kitan ruling clan did not see the difference of ethnicity as an unassailable cultural boundary.<sup>270</sup> This figure, Han Derang, was also granted the imperial Kitan name of Yelü, later becoming known as Yelü Longyun.<sup>271</sup> Crossley’s reassessment of Han Derang based on epigraphic evidence, establishes the case for an individual whose life straddled the traditional boundary of Kitan-Han identity.<sup>272</sup> After the fall of the Liao dynasty, this ambiguity with regard to Han identity continued in the former administrative districts of the Liao polity. Twitchett and Franke note that the primarily ‘Han’ population of the Sixteen Prefectures resisted the military advances of the Song (whom we would also now class as ‘Han’) and instead accepted the suzerainty of the Jin dynasty, a polity led by the Jurchen people.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> They were usually referred to as either *Hanren* or *Haner*, see: Crossley, “Outside In: Power, Identity, and the Han Lineage of Jizhou.” p.86. and Elliott, “Hushuo: The Northern Other and the Naming of the Han Chinese.” p.187.

<sup>269</sup> See the conclusion to: Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty: Frontier Crossings in Liao China*.

<sup>270</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. pp.515-7.

<sup>271</sup> Note that the ‘Han’ in Han Derang is the surname 韓 rather than the ethnonym 漢 that we have just been discussing.

<sup>272</sup> Crossley, “Outside In: Power, Identity, and the Han Lineage of Jizhou.” p.54.

<sup>273</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.39.

Perhaps the most interesting development in the definition of the term ‘Han’ with regard to the Liao came under the Yuan dynasty. In this period, ‘Han’ was used to describe a specific range of people that became codified in law.<sup>274</sup> Elliott informs us that the term ‘Han’ in the Yuan incorporated not just those who had fallen under that same classification in the Liao and Jin, but rather anyone who had been a subject of the Jin dynasty.<sup>275</sup> This group naturally included a large number of ethnic Kitan and Jurchen, meaning that within the Yuan polity, the Kitan were classified as ‘Han’. Of equal interest is that, in the same Yuan classification system, people that formerly fell under the jurisdiction of the Southern Song were not classed as ‘Han’, but rather as ‘southerners’.<sup>276</sup> This suggests that the distinction created in the secondary literature between a ‘Kitan’ Liao dynasty and a ‘Han’ Song dynasty is a somewhat disingenuous interpretation of the historical circumstances.

‘Kitan’ and ‘Han’ were not diametrically opposed constants throughout history but rather identifiers that were in a constant state of flux. The narrative of ‘sinification’, however, only allows for change on the Kitan side of this spectrum. In a critique of Steinhardt’s *Liao Architecture* for example, Kuhn states that any monograph on the Liao should dedicate ‘more than ten sentences’ to the question of ‘who are the Kitan?’.<sup>277</sup> While I do not necessarily disagree with this sentiment, Kuhn gives no indication that the term ‘Han’ should warrant equal explanation. To use the term ‘Han’ without further qualification as a generic term for ‘Chinese’ identity is just as redundant as trying to use the current borders of China to set the boundaries of a dynastic past to which they did not apply.

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<sup>274</sup> Crossley, “Outside In: Power, Identity, and the Han Lineage of Jizhou.” p.87.

<sup>275</sup> Elliott, “Hushuo: The Northern Other and the Naming of the Han Chinese.” p.187.

<sup>276</sup> Elliott. p.189.

<sup>277</sup> Kuhn, “‘Liao Architecture’: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?” p.332.

Shifting policy within the PRC in recent decades has actually forced the Liao back within the bounds of the Chinese historical narrative in many ways. Baranovitch has explored changes in government-issued history textbooks in China from the 1950s through to the year 2003.<sup>278</sup> He discovered that, while ‘non-Han’ dynasties such as the Liao were originally classed as foreigners on China’s borders in the 1950s, by the 1980s they became considered part of China. This is perhaps best encapsulated in the fact that Song conflicts with the Liao go from being considered to be a war against a foreign power to being a civil war between two Chinese political factions.<sup>279</sup> This change can be seen as part of a larger movement towards an inclusive model by a Chinese government that was attempting to create a sense of national unity.<sup>280</sup>

Unfortunately, the re-inclusion of the Liao into the historical narrative of China creates an awkward Catch-22 situation. While the perception now is that the geographic location of the Liao polity necessitates the dynasties inclusion within studies of ‘China’, the pervading negative associations of the dynasty generated over the previous century of scholarly discourse mean that the Liao will always be relegated to the periphery of any such work. This forces a situation in which it is all but impossible to produce a study with the Liao polity at its centre without it becoming a part of the ‘sinification’ debate.

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<sup>278</sup> Nimrod Baranovitch, “Others No More: The Changing Representation of Non-Han Peoples in Chinese History Textbooks, 1951–2003,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 1 (2010): 85–122.

<sup>279</sup> Baranovitch. p.104.

<sup>280</sup> Perdue, “The Chinese.” p.15.

Despite this, we still have to question whether the Liao's level of 'Chinese-ness' is really the most appropriate metric for discussing the dynasty. The evidence presented thus far has demonstrated that the presentation of the Liao and Song as binary opposites has proved to be a largely historiographical construct. This is not to say there were no differences between the two polities, just that they were not two bounded entities - one Chinese, one not – that were perfectly distinct from one another. Interaction between the two should not be seen as the ebb and flow between two poles of an essentialised Chinese ideal, but rather as political and cultural interaction between two polities that formed part of a much wider network of exchange.<sup>281</sup> If we wish to define the Liao in any way other than its opposition to 'China', then perhaps these expanded networks can provide the new metrics we need with which to explore the dynasty.

### **1.3. The Liao in a regional context:**

Despite often being subsumed underneath the vast umbrella of the Chinese national teleology, the Liao polity existed within a contemporary East Asian world that extended far beyond the protagonists of that particular narrative. The Five Dynasties and Northern Song were both important political, cultural and religious neighbours for the Liao; but they were also just two among a varied and constantly changing cast that made up the Liao world order.<sup>282</sup> Far from being just a 'Chinese' history, East Asia during this period was a melting pot of exchange; a world where pirates from Japan rose to dominate the East China Sea and Korean coast; where multi-ethnic armies battled over disputed territory; and where Buddhist

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<sup>281</sup> For a similar argument with regard to the Xiongnu, see: Miller, "The Southern Xiongnu in Northern China: Navigating and Negotiating the Middle Ground." p.129.

<sup>282</sup> Rana Mitter, *Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). p.5.

monks from all over the region would cross the continent in search of deeper learning.<sup>283</sup> The Liao polity's position within this world remains largely a mystery, however, due to the narrow lens through which it has previously been studied.<sup>284</sup>

The idea of observing East Asian exchange beyond the central plains of China is certainly not a new one. In fact, the idea of a "crescent-shaped cultural-communication belt" that bypassed this region entirely has been around since the 1980s.<sup>285</sup> Curving from Korea and northern China, round through Tibet to Yunnan, Tong Enzheng provided a hypothesis for a system of exchange that connected disparate parts of the East Asia region from as early as 6500BCE.<sup>286</sup>

The cultural sphere in which the Liao played an active part certainly was not limited to the Five Dynasties (907-960) and the Song (960-1127) to their south. Alongside these dynasties, to the south-west, existed the various Tibetan kingdoms that filled the void left by the fall of the Tibetan Empire in 842.<sup>287</sup> The west witnessed the rise of the Western Xia (1038-1227) and the gradual territorial encroachment of the Islamic world into famous Silk-Route trading centres such as Kashgar and Khotan.<sup>288</sup> In the north, the Liao engaged with a variety of groups, chief among which were the Jurchen to the north-east. Finally, the east featured not

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<sup>283</sup> See respectively: Yukio Lippit, "Goryeo Buddhist Painting in an Interregional Context," *Ars Orientalis* 35 (2008): 192–232. p.196, Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. and Kirill. J. Solonin, "Khitan Influences and the Formation of the Tangut Buddhist State," in *Perspectives on the Liao* (New Haven: Bard Graduate Centre, 2010). p.5.

<sup>284</sup> The lack of previous monographs on this subject is highlighted in David Curtis Wright, "The Sung-Kitan War of A.D. 1004-1005 and the Treaty of Shan-Yuan," *Journal of Asian History* 32, no. 1 (1998): 3–48. p.19.

<sup>285</sup> Anke Hein, ed., *The 'Crescent-Shaped Cultural-Communication Belt': Tong Enzheng's Model in Retrospect* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2014). p.2.

<sup>286</sup> See: 童恩正 Tong Enzheng, "On the Crescent Shaped Cultural Belt from Northeast to Southwest China (試論我國從東北至西南的邊地半月形文化 傳播帶)," in *Wenwu Yu Kaogu Lunji* (文物與考古論集) (Beijing: Wenjin Chubanshe (文津出版社), 1987), 17–43. For an assessment of the validity and long-term impact of Tong's work, see: Hein, *The 'Crescent-Shaped Cultural-Communication Belt': Tong Enzheng's Model in Retrospect*.

<sup>287</sup> Sometimes referred to as Tibet's 'period of fragmentation', there remains little detail on these individual kingdoms - for the initial breakdown of the Tibetan Empire see: Christopher Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). Chapter 6.

<sup>288</sup> Beckwith. p.175.



only the Kingdom of Balhae (698-926) - until its fall to the Liao in 926 - but also the polities of Koryŏ (918-1270) and Heian (794-1185) in the Korean peninsula and Japanese archipelago respectively. Although this chapter will explore the current scholarship on the Liao dynasty's relationship with each of these major players, this still will not come close to demonstrating the Liao's connections with its neighbours as there are also at least fifty-nine smaller kingdoms and protectorates - such as the northern groups of Wugu and Yujueli - enumerated within the *Liaoshi* that are yet to be explored.<sup>289</sup>

The necessity of taking a regional approach to Liao history has already been established by numerous figures within the field. The 2013 special edition of the *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* on the Liao served to highlight this change in thinking, with papers exploring Liao connections with the Western Xia, Heian Japan and the Islamic world.<sup>290</sup> Perhaps the best summary for why a regional approach to the Liao is essential comes from Di Cosmo, who stated that: "the Liao dynasty, as well as its culture, traditions and place in history, cannot be fully appraised without considering the web of relations that linked the Kitan to the other non-Chinese peoples who were co-protagonists of this history".<sup>291</sup> This argument in favour of exploring wider regional connections with regard to the Liao has long been supported by Steinhardt and has also been suggested as a necessary step in the study of other polities in this

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<sup>289</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. pp.50-52.

<sup>290</sup> This volume was based on the proceedings of the 'Perspectives on the Liao' Conference at Yale's Bard Graduate Centre (many of the papers from which are also referenced in this section). For the Liao connections mentioned above, see respectively: Kirill. J. Solonin, "Buddhist Connections between the Liao and Xixia: Preliminary Considerations," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 43, no. 1 (2013): 171-219., Youn-mi Kim, "The Hidden Link: Tracing Liao Buddhism in Shingon Ritual," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 43 (2013): 117-70., Biran, "Unearthing the Liao Dynasty's Relations with the Muslim World: Migrations, Diplomacy, Commerce, and Mutual Perceptions." and Anya King, "Early Islamic Sources on the Kitan Liao: The Role of Trade," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 43 (2013): 253-71.

<sup>291</sup> Di Cosmo, "Liao History and Society." p.21.

period such as the Song and Koryŏ.<sup>292</sup> Connections to the Song and the Five Dynasties alone will only ever provide a small piece of the puzzle in exploring the Liao's regional context and significance. It is therefore important to investigate the 'web of relations' that Di Cosmo describes.

In this section, we will observe the different ways in which scholars have covered the Liao dynasty's exchanges with some of the major polities that are not included within the accepted Chinese dynastic succession. It is worth noting at this stage, that the majority of the studies that will be covered do not focus on the Liao directly, but instead encounter the dynasty via the other side of each of these exchange relationships.<sup>293</sup> We often, therefore, encounter the now familiar problem of the Liao being put in dichotomous opposition to the subject of each study. As a result, the Liao are rarely viewed as a regional centre and always on the periphery of someone else's history. Despite this, there are certain themes that crop up repeatedly in these accounts of Liao exchange that may provide models for further exploration.

### **1.3.1. Liao-Balhae:**

The Kingdom of Balhae (698-926) existed on the edge of the Korean peninsula and occupied a territory that would now incorporate the Chinese provinces of Liaoning and Jilin, as well as southern Heilongjiang. It existed as an independent state until its conquest by the Liao in 926,

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<sup>292</sup> See: Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.6. Sen, "The Revival and Failure of Buddhist Translations during the Song Dynasty." p.33, Lippit, "Goryeo Buddhist Painting in an Interregional Context." p.194 and Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170*. Introduction.

<sup>293</sup> The one exception being a study of gift giving in the Liao world, see: Valerie Hansen, "International Gifting and the Kitan World, 907–1125," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 43 (2013): 273–302.

after which the majority of its districts and population were incorporated directly into the Liao polity.<sup>294</sup> The former regions of the Kingdom of Balhae remained under Liao jurisdiction until almost the end of the dynasty, only being taken a few years before the deposition of Yanxi in 1125.<sup>295</sup>

Scholarship on the history of Balhae in European languages has been limited, with little original research and only one Korean study of the subject having been fully translated into English.<sup>296</sup> Sloane has argued that this publication, along with many of the others produced in both Korean and Chinese, represent an attempt by scholars from both countries to incorporate Balhae within their own national histories.<sup>297</sup> The Kingdom of Balhae's geographical position straddling the current border between North Korea and China can be used to support either case, with the majority of the debate revolving around the cultural and ethnic identity of the Balhae population as well as their political position and allegiances.<sup>298</sup> This current

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<sup>294</sup> Although it remained independent, the Kingdom of Balhae is described as entering into a 'tributary' relationship with the Tang in the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century. However, recent scholarship has questioned the level of influence this term actually implied in historical East Asian political relationships, see: Morris. Rossabi, ed., *Governing China's Multiethnic Frontier* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004). p.5. and Sloane, "Parhae in Historiography and Archaeology: International Debate and Prospects for Resolution." p.15.

<sup>295</sup> Ki-Baik Lee, *A New History of Korea, A New History of Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984). p.134.

<sup>296</sup> John Duncan, *A New History of Parhae* (Seoul: The Northeast Asia History Foundation, 2012). Chapter 4 of the translated version of Ki-Baik Lee's history of Korea also provides a good overview of the Korean historical perspective on this kingdom, see: Lee, *A New Hist. Korea*. Chapter 4. The majority of the archaeological work at Balhae sites has been carried out by joint projects between Russian and either Chinese or Korean archaeologists such as those at Madina and Kraskino, see: 张锡英 Zhang Xiyi, "Excavation Briefing for the Huichun Madida Pagoda Foundation (琿春马滴达渤海塔基清理简报)," *Bowuguan Yanjiu* (博物馆研究), no. 2 (1984). The Kraskino site reports are available in both Russian and Korean online through the North East Asian History Network: [http://contents.nahf.or.kr/item/item.do?levelId=kr.d\\_0008](http://contents.nahf.or.kr/item/item.do?levelId=kr.d_0008) (accessed 04/08/17).

<sup>297</sup> Sloane, "Parhae in Historiography and Archaeology: International Debate and Prospects for Resolution." p.3. See also: Ki-Ho Song, "Current Trends in the Research of Palhae History," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 6 (1990): 157–74. p.159. To see how this has affected other studies of Chinese architecture, see: Steinhardt, "Chinese Architectural History in the Twenty-First Century." p.54.

<sup>298</sup> For examples of the arguments on either side of this debate see: 冯海英 Feng Haiying, 肖莉杰 Xiao Lijie, and 霍学雷 Huo Xuelei, "Studies by Chinese Scholars from the 1990s Onwards Exploring the Nationalities and Regimes of the Bohai Kingdom (20 世纪 90 年代以来中国学者对渤海 国民族与政权的研究)," *Dongbei Shidi*, no. 6 (2008): 48–51. And Duncan, *A New History of Parhae*. Introduction.

competition between historians makes it difficult to create an impression of what Balhae's position may actually have been within its contemporary East Asian context (much like the issues we have already witnessed in Liao scholarship - albeit for different reasons). Having already established the Liao dynasty's slightly awkward situation within the Chinese national narrative, it is interesting to note that they also play the role of outsider in Korean work on Balhae as well.<sup>299</sup> This leaves the Liao as a 'foreign' power in both Korean and Chinese interpretations of the period.

There has been little scholarship thus far on any relationship between the Kitan people and the Balhae polity prior to the formation of the Liao dynasty. Our first accounts of contact between the two groups in the *Liaoshi* start with the border conflicts that began in 924.<sup>300</sup> After the annexation of Balhae, Wittfogel and Feng's interpretation of the *Liaoshi* text suggests that there was a mistrust amongst the Liao elite of the former Balhae population leading to a not entirely successful integration into the Liao polity. The evidence provided to support this conclusion is that former people of Balhae were not allowed to bear arms unless in the army, as well as the fact that only a limited number of government positions were made available to people of Balhae under the Liao administration.<sup>301</sup> The *Liaoshi* also reports large-scale resettlement of people from Balhae to other districts under Liao jurisdiction.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> See the framing of the Liao conquest of Balhae in: Lee, *A New Hist. Korea*. p.156.

<sup>300</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.66.

<sup>301</sup> For right to bear arms – Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.539, and for governmental positions: Wittfogel and Feng.p.464. Although it should be noted that the measures they describe supporting this notion do not stand-out as being out of line when compared to those applied to any large population during this period, see for example the rules and curfews applied to people living in Chang'an during the High Tang, a period recognised for its supposed 'cosmopolitanism': Victor Cunrui Xiong, *Sui-Tang Chang'an: A Study in the Urban History of Medieval China* (Ann Arbor: Centre for Chinese Studies, 2000). p.196.

<sup>302</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, 1946: 52, and Lin, "Perceptions of Liao Urban Landscapes: Political Practices and Nomadic Empires." p.226

Despite this, post-Wittfogel and Feng, secondary literature has been keen to demonstrate the influence of the Balhae population on their Kitan conquerors. Both Mote and Kuhn have suggested that Balhae acted as a semi-sinicised proxy in the gradual acculturation of the Liao dynasty towards a more ‘Chinese’ way of life and administration.<sup>303</sup> While this concept of reverse cultural imperialism (where the conquered are seen to affect the culture of their conquerors) can be seen as just a product of the acculturation narrative surrounding the Liao, the incorporation of the Kingdom of Balhae into the Liao polity should still be viewed as having a major impact on Liao history.

Firstly, in a period prior to the Liao annexation of the Sixteen Prefectures, Balhae provided the Liao polity with its earliest large-scale, primarily sedentary, agrarian population, estimated to total approximately one million people.<sup>304</sup> This dramatic shift in population demographics has been credited with necessitating (and providing a model for) new methods of government and civil administration within the Liao administration.<sup>305</sup> New populations also bring new material culture, and many Liao archaeological sites and their associated finds are often suggested to be based upon earlier Balhae examples. Everything from Liao city design and architecture, through to goldwares and ceramics have been claimed at various points as having Balhae archetypes as their point of origin.<sup>306</sup> While this is likely true in some

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<sup>303</sup>Mote, *Imperial China: 900-1800*. p.77 and Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China*. p.15.

<sup>304</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.56.

<sup>305</sup> Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170*. p.211 and Biran, “Kitan Migrations in Eurasia (10th – 14th Centuries).” p.87.

<sup>306</sup> See respectively: Lin, “Perceptions of Liao Urban Landscapes: Political Practices and Nomadic Empires.” p.226, Steinhardt, “A Response to Dieter Kuhn, ‘Liao Architecture: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?’” p.460. Kuhn, “‘Liao Architecture’: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?” p.339. and Louis, “Shaping Symbols of Privilege: Precious Metals and the Early Liao Aristocracy.” p.90.

cases, these statements are often based on assumptions that the semi-nomadic Kitan people could not have created these things for themselves and are regularly framed within the idea of nomadic cultural inferiority that we explored earlier in this chapter.<sup>307</sup> Balhae captives held by the Liao before the conquest of the kingdom have even been associated with introducing Buddhism to the Liaoxi steppes.<sup>308</sup> Given the position of the pre-dynastic Kitan between the Tang and Uighur polities, both of whom had already embraced Buddhism, this seems to be highly implausible. Despite all of the links that have been drawn between the two, the connections between Balhae and Liao material culture still remain largely unexplored archaeologically, leading Steinhardt to suggest that until this changes, there will always be ‘a missing link in our understanding’.<sup>309</sup>

Regardless of the extent to which the Liao drew on Balhae culturally, the conquest of the kingdom in 926 would certainly have extended the geographical bounds of the Liao world. The annexation of former Balhae administrative districts would have put the Liao polity into direct contact with the newly formed Koryŏ dynasty in Korea. Balhae also had strong diplomatic ties beyond the Korean peninsula both in mainland East Asia and the Japanese archipelago. In diplomatic correspondence, the rulers of Balhae and Heian Japan referred to each other in familial terms and it is therefore possible that these pre-established connections may have formed the basis for Liao diplomatic contact in the east.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> For example, see: Kuhn, “‘Liao Architecture’: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?”. And Mote, *Imperial China: 900-1800*. p.86.

<sup>308</sup> Lin, “Perceptions of Liao Urban Landscapes: Political Practices and Nomadic Empires.” p.237.

<sup>309</sup> Steinhardt, “A Response to Dieter Kuhn, ‘Liao Architecture: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?’” p.460.

<sup>310</sup> For diplomatic ties between Balhae and Japan, see: Sloane, “Parhae in Historiography and Archaeology: International Debate and Prospects for Resolution.” p.19.

### 1.3.2. Liao-Koryŏ:

The Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392) occupied the majority of the Korean peninsula during the Liao dynastic period and beyond - continuing as a 'vassal' state of the Yuan dynasty in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. After the end of the Yuan dynasty, Koryŏ existed once again as an independent polity until 1392. Although Koryŏ did keep its own historical records these were not compiled into the *Koryŏsa* (History of Koryŏ) until the mid-fifteenth century under King Sejong of the Joseon dynasty - a date significantly later than even the *Liaoshi* that was completed in 1344. Alongside this chronological gap between the Liao period and the production of the text, there are also other issues with the *Koryŏsa* as a source for the Liao dynasty. The entire tenth century receives only sparse coverage within the text as the Koryŏ dynastic archives were destroyed during a Liao invasion of 1011.<sup>311</sup>

Although no monographs have yet been produced on the subject of Liao-Koryŏ relations, Breuker's work on the 'pluralist' nature of Koryŏ diplomacy may be of significance to this study of the Liao in a regional context.<sup>312</sup> One of the key theses of Breuker's research is that the Koryŏ literati's ideological orientation allowed for a non-monist, or 'plural', view of the universe.<sup>313</sup> Breuker proposes that this worldview allowed them to bypass the historiographical issues generated by the 'Mandate of Heaven' and ideas of universal rule explored earlier in this chapter.<sup>314</sup> There are many, seemingly self-contradictory, pieces of

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<sup>311</sup> Michael Rogers, "National Consciousness in Medieval Korea: The Impact of Liao and Chin on Koryŏ," in *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbours, 10th-14th Centuries*, ed. Morris. Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 151-72. p.151.

<sup>312</sup> Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170*. Chapter 6.

<sup>313</sup> Remco E Breuker, "Koryŏ as an Independent Realm: The Emperor's Clothes?," *Korean Studies* 27 (2003): 48-84. p.48.

<sup>314</sup> Breuker. p.50.

evidence contained both within the *Koryŏsa* and other surviving written sources that suggest Koryŏ viewed itself simultaneously as the centre of its own universal empire while also acknowledging the universal rule of other polities as well.<sup>315</sup> For example, an inscription accompanying a Buddhist sculpture of Bhaisajyaguru Boddhisattva uses the Song dynastic reign period (thereby acknowledging the Song emperor) as a date but also prays for the prosperity of the ‘Emperor of Koryŏ’.<sup>316</sup> The only way this can be justified from a logical standpoint is if the Koryŏ literati accepted and internalised the inherent contradiction of multiple ‘universal emperors’.

It is also interesting to note that similar situations of conflicted universality may have existed in different periods in the Korean peninsula. Sloane, for example, found a similar relationship between Silla (57BCE-935CE) and the Tang prior to the Liao period. Although Silla were officially labelled as a ‘tributary state’ of the Tang, they maintained a degree of autonomy within the Korean peninsula that defied the traditional conception of a ‘tributary state’ in Chinese historiography.<sup>317</sup> Equally, Kye has pointed out that Koryŏ’s successors in the region, the Joseon dynasty, viewed their tributary status with the Ming as ‘utilitarian and somewhat contractual’. The language used by the Joseon in official transactions between the two polities implied that, although Ming suzerainty was accepted, they were also just one potential leader and could be replaced at any time depending on the political climate.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170*. p.3.

<sup>316</sup> Breuker, “Koryŏ as an Independent Realm: The Emperor’s Clothes?” p.50

<sup>317</sup> Sloane, “Parhae in Historiography and Archaeology: International Debate and Prospects for Resolution.” p.15.

<sup>318</sup> Seung Kye, “Huddling under the Imperial Umbrella: A Korean Approach to Ming China in the Early 1500s,” *The Journal of Korean Studies* 15, no. 1 (2010): 41–66. p.41.



As with the situation of the Liao we witnessed earlier in the chapter, the concept of universal rule seems to have been at perpetual odds with the contemporary political reality in the Korean peninsula. It appears that, in Koryŏ identity at least, the concept of universal rule had already been identified as a trope from a historical tradition that did not reflect their lived experience.<sup>319</sup> The fact that the language of universality continued to be used in Koryŏ despite this awareness suggests that scholars of East Asia need to proceed with caution when accepting the language used to describe political relationships in official dynastic histories and texts. As early as 1946, Wittfogel and Feng had already identified that much of the terminology used in the *Liaoshi* to describe diplomatic relationships relied more on the models available to its compilers from the Chinese language historiographical tradition than it did on relaying the practical political situation they were attempting to convey.<sup>320</sup>

The complexities of Koryŏ's attitude to universal rule also extends into accounts of the dynasty's relationship with the Liao. Breuker points out that the Koryŏ literati embraced contradiction, applying the literary archetype of the 'barbarian other' to the Kitan when it suited their needs while also praising the achievements of the Liao dynasty as a legitimate imperial entity when the situation required it.<sup>321</sup> In periods where Koryŏ officially recognised the Liao over the Song as the holders of Heaven's mandate (their allegiances changed over time), the terminology used for the Liao polity itself is the same as that of any other legitimate dynasty. In less amicable times, the familiar tropes of the Liao as 'northern barbarians' take hold.<sup>322</sup> This rhetoric could work both ways, however, as all these East Asian polities were working from the same historiographical playbook. Wu notes that the Liao also

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<sup>319</sup> Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170*. p.297.

<sup>320</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.50.

<sup>321</sup> Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170*. p.218.

<sup>322</sup> Breuker. p.202.

used similar Chinese language rhetorical devices to describe Koryŏ, stating that the Liao claimed they were utilising the *yi-yi* (夷夷) technique of ‘using the barbarian to fight the barbarian’ when Koryŏ were engaged in conflict with their northern neighbours such as the Jurchen.<sup>323</sup> This being the case, it seems that once again both parties may just have been drawing on classical literary archetypes for the ‘other’ rather than genuinely viewing the other dynasty as a ‘barbarian’ one. Reinforcing this idea, is the fact that in times of peace, the Liao and Song are normally described as the ‘Northern’ and ‘Southern’ dynasties in Koryŏ literature, demonstrating that they both were placed on an equal political footing.<sup>324</sup>

Breuker’s use of the idea of ‘plurality’, to describe the Koryŏ elite’s understanding of the complex webs of exchange in East Asia may prove a useful concept in moving past traditional sino-centric viewpoints regarding the Liao.<sup>325</sup> While the language used to describe the Liao in Koryŏ texts could be used to categorise the dynasty as either ‘Chinese’ or ‘barbarian’, Breuker’s work suggests it may be more productive for us to bypass these conceptions and view the ever-changing politics of the period in question.

Whichever terminology they chose to use in their official correspondence, there is no denying that the Liao and Koryŏ shared an important political and cultural association throughout the

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<sup>323</sup> 武玉環 Wu Yuhuan, “On the Relationship between Liao and Koryo and the Eastern Border Policies in Liao (论辽与高丽的关系及辽的东部边疆政策),” *Jilin University Journal Social Sciences Edition* 4 (2001): 76–80. p.79. A decision which Goldin notes that they may later have come to regret given their eventual conquest by the Jurchen in 1225: Paul Rakita Goldin, “Changing the Frontier Policy in the Northern Wei and Liao Dynasties,” *Journal of Asian History* 33, no. 1 (1999): 45–62. p.56.

<sup>324</sup> Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170*. p.217. The idea of the Liao and Song being northern and southern dynasties was also a factor in their own political correspondence with each other as discussed in Chapter one, leading the historians of the Yuan when compiling the history of the two dynasties to consider splitting the histories of the period into a ‘Northern’ and ‘Southern’ history: Chan, “Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories.” p.73.

<sup>325</sup> Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170*. p.204

tenth and eleventh centuries. The Liao had previously had diplomatic contact in the Korean peninsula with the Silla dynasty for around a decade prior to Koryŏ's conquest of this longstanding polity. After Liao-Koryŏ contact had been established, there were frequent diplomatic missions between the two polities with the *Liaoshi* recording more envoys arriving from Koryŏ than any other polity, bar the Song.<sup>326</sup> Rogers even goes so far as to state that the political fates of the Liao, Song and Koryŏ were 'inextricably intertwined'.<sup>327</sup> In a political sense, this certainly seems to ring true with Koryŏ swapping its allegiances between these two major powers on multiple occasions, including what must have ultimately been a very confusing switch in calendars between the Liao calendar, Song calendar and their own dynastic reign dates.<sup>328</sup> Until the end of the tenth century there are few recorded diplomatic missions from Koryŏ to the Liao, with the Song being their chosen primary ally outside the peninsula.<sup>329</sup> Despite coercion by the Song in 986, Koryŏ never instigated a military campaign against the Liao.<sup>330</sup> The same could not be said of the Liao, however, and a military campaign in 993 ended with Koryŏ becoming recognised as a 'tributary state' of the Liao in 994.<sup>331</sup>

Payments made to the Liao from Koryŏ ranged from gold and purple fabrics, to muslin and ginseng.<sup>332</sup> A Song envoy to the Liao in 1093, Feng Ji, even spotted gifts that had originally been given to Koryŏ by the Song in a Liao Buddhist temple.<sup>333</sup> The Liao also offered gifts to

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<sup>326</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.318.

<sup>327</sup> Rogers, "National Consciousness in Medieval Korea: The Impact of Liao and Chin on Koryŏ." p.154.

<sup>328</sup> Di Cosmo, "Liao History and Society." p.18. For a brief timeline of Liao-Koryŏ diplomatic relations see: Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.318.

<sup>329</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.318.

<sup>330</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.102.

<sup>331</sup> Di Cosmo, "Liao History and Society." p.18.

<sup>332</sup> Wu Yuhuan, "On the Relationship between Liao and Koryŏ and the Eastern Border Policies in Liao (论辽与高丽的关系及辽的东部边疆政策)." p.4.

<sup>333</sup> Hansen, "International Gifting and the Kitan World, 907-1125." p.280.

Koryŏ, with mention in the *Liaoshi* of a presentation of some sheep in 1093 (again raising the question of the terminology used in Koryŏ's supposed 'tributary' status).<sup>334</sup> In the late tenth century, students were sent from Koryŏ as part of a diplomatic mission with the objective of learning the Kitan language.<sup>335</sup> In one noted episode, Liao Shengzong declined a proposed marriage alliance from King Sonjong of Koryŏ into the Liao imperial family, instead allowing him to marry a princess of the Xiao consort clan.<sup>336</sup> This suggests that not only was there a great deal of cultural and political exchange between the two polities but also that it was the Liao who had the greater degree of authority within the majority of these exchanges.

This constant stream of diplomatic exchange between the two polities in the eleventh century is not an indication that there had not previously been enmity between them. The Liao conquest of Balhae is thought to have offended Koryŏ, as this kingdom was seen as a remnant of Koguryŏ and therefore a part of their own jurisdiction (an argument still used to this day by Korean nationalist historians as we witnessed in the discussion of the Liao-Balhae relationship earlier in this section).<sup>337</sup> In 960, T'aejo Wang Kŏn cut off diplomatic ties with the Liao entirely, instead choosing to enter into a treaty with the newly formed Song dynasty. The Liao-Koryŏ treaty in 994 only came about after Liao encroachment into Koryŏ territory led to a renegotiation of their diplomatic terms.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.334.

<sup>335</sup> Hansen, "International Gifting and the Khitan World, 907-1125." p.280.

<sup>336</sup> Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.103.

<sup>337</sup> Rogers, "National Consciousness in Medieval Korea: The Impact of Liao and Chin on Koryŏ." p.154. and Breuker, "Koryŏ as an Independent Realm: The Emperor's Clothes?" p.54.

<sup>338</sup> Hansen, "International Gifting and the Kitan World, 907-1125." p.281.

This episode is recorded in detail in the *Koryŏsa* and highly praises the head of the Koryŏ negotiating team, Sŏ Hŭi for not only convincing the Liao army to turn back but also to return any lands that had already been occupied to Koryŏ.<sup>339</sup> Breuker has noted that this account lacks corroborating evidence in any of the Liao histories (and occurred in the period for which the Koryŏ dynastic archives had been destroyed). Rogers' conclusion is that the tale may have been created to lend legitimacy to the Koryŏ regime through an allegorical parallel of the Song's successful negotiations with the Liao in the treaty of Chanyuan.<sup>340</sup> If a successful treaty negotiation was judged to be the benchmark for success in a conflict with the Liao, then this episode serves to highlight the predominant position that the Liao's military must have held in this period.

Alongside the military and political exchanges that dominate the historical narrative, there would also have been a great deal of trade and other local exchange bridging the gap between the two polities. As Wu notes, despite the fact that the military episodes form a greater degree of the histories, the Liao-Koryŏ relationship was primarily a peaceful one and, during these peaceful periods, trade and commerce were largely uninterrupted.<sup>341</sup> While Hansen notes that many of the items that were recorded in Liao-Koryŏ exchange, such as reed mats, do not survive archaeologically, there are many artefacts that are still available for further exploration.<sup>342</sup> Liao bridles and saddles, for example, have been found in Koryŏ sites in a continuation of a tradition of equestrian items arriving in the Korean peninsula from what is

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<sup>339</sup> Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170*. p.204.

<sup>340</sup> Breuker. p.123. Rogers, "National Consciousness in Medieval Korea: The Impact of Liao and Chin on Koryŏ." p.157.

<sup>341</sup> Wu Yuhuan, "On the Relationship between Liao and Koryŏ and the Eastern Border Policies in Liao (论辽与高丽的关系及辽的东部边疆政策)."p.80. Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170*. p.205.

<sup>342</sup> Hansen, "International Gifting and the Kitan World, 907-1125." p.280.

now northeast China that dates from at least as early as the fourth century.<sup>343</sup> This trade stepped up, particularly after the Liao claimed jurisdiction over the traditional Koryŏ metal working districts in the north of the border zone around the frontier market at Poju.<sup>344</sup> Breuker also notes that it would have been the people themselves, as well as items they were trading, that would cross from one polity to the other, bringing with them ideas, language and cultural values.<sup>345</sup>

One of the key things that transitioned between the Liao and Koryŏ was new developments in the field of Buddhism. These could arrive in the form of scriptures and sutras, physical material objects such as paintings or even the monks and teachers themselves. The *Xu gaoseng zhuan* records that Silla monks had been travelling from Korea to famous Buddhist sites and temples under Tang jurisdiction since at least as early as the seventh century, in a tradition that carried through to the Koryŏ period.<sup>346</sup> Koryŏ certainly invested heavily in Buddhism at the imperial level, although there is little material evidence to indicate this, barring the stone pagodas that appear throughout the peninsula.<sup>347</sup> Lippit suggests that this lack of extant Koryŏ sites and artefacts is a reflection of the ravages the peninsula has faced in the intervening years, particularly noting the Sengoku Period Daimyo and general Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598), who relocated many Silla and Koryŏ Buddhist artefacts to the Japanese archipelago.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> Gina Lee Barnes, "The Emergence and Expansion of Silla from an Archaeological Perspective," *Korean Studies* 28 (2004): 14–48. p.34.

<sup>344</sup> Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170*. p.205.

<sup>345</sup> Breuker. p.205.

<sup>346</sup> Richard D. McBride, "Silla Buddhism and the Hwarang Segi Manuscripts," *Korean Studies* 31 (2010): 54–89. p.77.

<sup>347</sup> Kyung Moon Hwang, *A History of Korea* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Chapter 4.

<sup>348</sup> Lippit, "Goryeo Buddhist Painting in an Interregional Context." p.195. For Toyotomi's destruction of Buddhist architecture in the Korean peninsula, see: Won-yong Kim, *Korean Arts Vol. 3: Architecture* (Seoul: Ministry of Public Information, 1963). pp.10-11.

Koryŏ traded Buddhist material with both the Liao and Heian, as well as the Song dynasty, through the port city of Ningbo which was fast becoming a hub for the creation and trade of Buddhist art. As a result of these networks, Lippit has suggested that studies of Koryŏ Buddhist painting must move to a wider regional approach, from Dunhuang right through to Japan, to account for the movement of Buddhist material and ideas throughout East Asia.<sup>349</sup> This regional approach, Lippit argues, is also necessary to discover where Koryŏ examples would have been located within the Buddhist artistic corpus, as modern national boundaries that have divided recent scholarship had no place in the Buddhist networks of this period.<sup>350</sup>

With regard to exchange with the Liao, Lippit points to an early twentieth century tradition in Japanese historical scholarship of suggesting there may have been a ‘northern route’ between Koryŏ and Dunhuang which would explain the appearance of similar iconographical patterns in Buddhist art within these regions that do not appear in the traditional ‘Chinese’ heartlands.<sup>351</sup> Although this may be an over-simplification of the Buddhist trade networks of the tenth to twelfth centuries, any such route must have contained the Liao at its centre and there is much evidence to suggest that Koryŏ did view the Liao as a Buddhist nexus of sorts. Breuker suggests that the use of Buddhism may have been a deliberate imperial strategy of the Liao to ‘dazzle’ Koryŏ (and doubtless other regional powers as well) with a tradition in which they knew their neighbours would be eager to partake, lending the dynasty a certain air of legitimacy in the process.<sup>352</sup> Perhaps the biggest weapon in the Liao’s Buddhist arsenal came with the compilation of a full Buddhist canon under the reign of Liao Xingzong (1032-

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<sup>349</sup> Lippit, “Goryeo Buddhist Painting in an Interregional Context.” p.197.

<sup>350</sup> Lippit. p.200.

<sup>351</sup> Lippit. p.219.

<sup>352</sup> Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170*. p.218.

55) which became known as the Kitan Tripitaka (although it is important to note that this title does not refer to the script that the text was written in, as the Kitan Tripitaka was produced in Chinese – perhaps to be accessible to the largest possible audience).<sup>353</sup> This creation would have extended to many thousands of scrolls and involved massive imperial investment on a level that Buswell compares to the lunar missions of the 1960s.<sup>354</sup>

There is a possibility that dynastic competition may have been a factor in the construction of the Liao canon, with the Song's *Kaibao* edition of the Tripitaka having been completed in 987 and work on the Koryō Tripitaka beginning in 1011 (although it was not finished until 1087, significantly after the Liao version of the canon).<sup>355</sup> Although it was completed first, it does not necessarily follow that the *Kaibao* edition formed the basis for later versions of the Buddhist canon. Evidence from a later edition of the Koryō Tripitaka (produced after the original was destroyed during a Mongol invasion of 1234) suggest that the Liao Tripitaka may have risen to be the predominant edition of the Buddhist Canon by the thirteenth century. The second Koryō Tripitaka, completed in 1251 and extending to 81,258 woodblocks, became the gold-standard of the canon and is still being used by Buddhist scholars in Korea and Japan today. Buswell's study of the collation notes for this second Koryō version demonstrate that the head of the project, Sugi, believed that in the majority of cases, the Liao Tripitaka should form the basis of his own project as it represented the most

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<sup>353</sup> For the context of the Kitan tripitaka amongst other Liao Buddhist artefacts, see the exhibition guide for: Kazuya, *The Splendor of the Khitan Dynasty* (草原の王朝契丹). p.72, For more on the Kitan tripitaka, see: Koichi Kitsudo, "Liao Influence on Uighur Buddhism," in *Studies in Chinese Manuscripts: From the Warring States Period to the 20th Century*, ed. Imre Galambos (Budapest: Eotvos Lorand University, 2013), 225–47. p.225.

<sup>354</sup> Kitsudo, "Liao Influence on Uighur Buddhism." 225. And Buswell, "Sugi's 'Collation Notes' to the Koryō Buddhist Canon and Their Significance for Buddhist Textual Criticism." p.129.

<sup>355</sup> Buswell, "Sugi's 'Collation Notes' to the Koryō Buddhist Canon and Their Significance for Buddhist Textual Criticism." p.129.



accurate version of the canon up to that point. Juxtaposed against the Liao Tripitaka, Sugi stated that in the *Kaibao* edition: ‘the text is corrupt, the meaning cannot be construed, and it is difficult to find a way of interpreting them’.<sup>356</sup> This preference for the Liao Tripitaka led to the inclusion of passages in the second Koryō Tripitaka that were not even present in the original Koryō or Kaibao editions.<sup>357</sup>

### 1.3.3. Liao-Heian:

The Heian dynasty (794-1185) rose to prominence in the Kinai region of the Japanese archipelago and is perhaps most famous for moving the imperial capital from Nara to Kyoto and the construction that occurred in the city thereafter. Although this is traditionally framed as one of the most open periods in Japanese national history, with new ideas in all fields from religion and politics to art and architecture arriving in the archipelago, this openness had largely shifted to a more conservative, ‘isolationist’ outlook by the time the Liao dynasty rose to prominence at the beginning of the tenth century.<sup>358</sup> The introduction of the *nenki* system in 911 severely limited mainland merchants’ ability to trade with Heian and, after the fall of many of their traditional diplomatic allies on the continent such as Tang, Silla and Balhae, the dynasty refused to re-establish strong diplomatic ties with any of the new powers such as Liao, Song and Koryō.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Translation after: Buswell. p.139.

<sup>357</sup> Buswell. p.141.

<sup>358</sup> Caiger and Mason, *A History of Japan*. p.64.

<sup>359</sup> Mikael Adolphson, Edward Kamens, and Stacie Matsumoto, *Heian Japan: Centers and Peripheries* (Honolulu: Univeristy of Hawai’i Press, 2007). p.372.

Surviving records in the Japanese chronicle the *Shoko nihongi*, suggest that Heian diplomatic contact with Balhae began in 727 and that by 772, the two rulers had begun referring to each other in familial terms (albeit with Heian as the senior party).<sup>360</sup> Although the Liao may have adopted some of Balhae's diplomatic connections following the conquest of the kingdom in 926, their connection with Heian never reached these levels of familiarity. The *Liaoshi* only records tributary missions from Heian to the Liao court in 1091 and 1092, and Wittfogel and Feng note that in each of these cases the nature of the 'tribute' is not made explicit suggesting that these may, more likely, have been courtesy gifts rather than viewed as tribute by the Heian dynasts themselves.<sup>361</sup> Regardless of the actual situation, Heian is classed among the subordinate states in the *Liaoshi* in a repeat of the rhetoric of universality that seems to have been used equally by many of the dynasties in this period.<sup>362</sup> In fact, as Dunnell has stated, despite adopting purportedly 'Chinese' cultural elements such as written language, ideas and technologies, none of the early Japanese dynasties ever self-identified as 'Chinese' or saw themselves as a periphery tributary state of a larger continental empire.<sup>363</sup>

All of this is not to say that Heian in the tenth century simply ceased its cultural exchanges with the continent and the Liao. Ho, for example, has noted that the appearance of mirrors engraved with Buddhist imagery found at tomb sites in Japan potentially mirror (unavoidable pun) those found on the exterior of pagodas constructed under the Liao polity such as the Hohhot Baita.<sup>364</sup> The Buddhist connection, once again, provides one of the strongest links in

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<sup>360</sup> Sloane, "Parhae in Historiography and Archaeology: International Debate and Prospects for Resolution." p.14.

<sup>361</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.318.

<sup>362</sup> Wittfogel and Feng. p.50.

<sup>363</sup> Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia*. p.12.

<sup>364</sup> Chuimei Ho, "Magic and Faith: Reflections on Chinese Mirrors in the Tenth to the Fourteenth Century," *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art* 9 (2005): 90–97. p.94.

the available scholarship between the Liao and their overseas neighbours. To some extent, Heian's isolationist stance also extended to Buddhist practice, with the Lotus sutra remaining central during this period even after developments on the continent had moved towards Huayan and Chan teachings.<sup>365</sup> Carr has noted that, in the eighth century, to help overcome the distance from the life of the Buddha both spatially and temporally, Japanese temples started to use relics of Prince Shotoku as an alternative to the physical remains of the Buddha himself, further separating them from the need to import relics from the continent.<sup>366</sup> There are no records of any Japanese monks having headed to India so their knowledge of Buddhism was still likely to have been filtered entirely through Chinese language materials many of which came from the Liao (often indirectly through Koryō).<sup>367</sup> The most important of these Liao Buddhist texts would undoubtedly have been Kitan Tripitaka, notes and commentaries of which were taken over to the Japanese archipelago by the Koryō monk Uicheon in the late eleventh century.<sup>368</sup>

Alongside this indirect exchange, recent research by Kim has suggested that there may have been direct contact, or at least a stronger degree of indirect contact, between Heian and Liao Buddhism than scholars had previously anticipated.<sup>369</sup> Through a comparison of Liao archaeological data and Japanese texts, Kim's study demonstrates that Liao esoteric Buddhist

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<sup>365</sup> Asai Endo and Jacqueline Stone, "The 'Lotus Sutra' as the Core of Japanese Buddhism: Shifts in Representations of Its Fundamental Principle," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 41, no. 1 (2014): 45–64. p.62. and Paul Groner and Jacqueline Stone, "Editors' Introduction: The 'Lotus Sutra' in Japan," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 41, no. 1 (2014): 1–23. p.5.

<sup>366</sup> Kevin Gray Carr, "Pieces of Princes: Personalized Relics in Medieval Japan," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 38, no. 1 (2011): 93–127. p.105.

<sup>367</sup> See: Carr. p.95. For the lack of Buddhist monks travelling from Japan and Kitsudo, "Liao Influence on Uighur Buddhism." p.225. for the import of Buddhist texts via Koryō.

<sup>368</sup> Kitsudo, "Liao Influence on Uighur Buddhism." p.226.

<sup>369</sup> Kim, "The Hidden Link: Tracing Liao Buddhism in Shingon Ritual." p.119. and for more detail see the thesis of the author on the same topic: Youn-mi Kim, "Eternal Ritual in an Infinite Cosmos: The Chaoyang North Pagoda (1043-1044)" (Harvard, 2010).

ritual was transmitted to the Japanese archipelago where it created the basis for a whole new school of Shingon ritual, the Nyoho Sonsho.<sup>370</sup> This ritual had originally being considered an indigenous Heian tradition, due to claims that the wish fulfilling stone at the centre of the ceremony could be traced back to the eminent monk and founder of the Shingon school, Kukai (774-835). Kim points to evidence, however, in the *Ono ruihuisho*, that the stone instead came from Hanjun (1038-1112), the monk who started the ritual in Japan and a figure who was in personal contact with another monk, Myojun, known to have visited the Liao specifically in search of advancements in esoteric Buddhist practise.<sup>371</sup> If this does prove to be the case, and the Nyoho Sonshu is originally based on a Liao ritual, it demonstrates the extent to which we need to 're-evaluate the Liao's position within the Buddhist networks of East Asia.

#### **1.3.4. Liao-Western Xia:**

The Western Xia dynasty (1038-1227)<sup>372</sup> came to prominence during the Liao period in the eleventh century administering a region of north-central China until their conquest by the Mongols in the early thirteenth century. Like the Kitan rulers of the Liao dynasty, the Tangut rulers of the Xia introduced their own script and funded the translation of literary works into Tangut with the vast majority of those surviving (many were lost during the Mongol conquest) being translations of Buddhist scriptures.<sup>373</sup> Although the fact that we have the

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<sup>370</sup> Kim, "The Hidden Link: Tracing Liao Buddhism in Shingon Ritual." p.121.

<sup>371</sup> Kim. p.163.

<sup>372</sup> Linrothe comments that despite only being identified as a legitimate dynasty by their peers in 1038 with the proclamation of Yuanhao as the first Emperor of Da Xia, their rise to power had begun much earlier and many of the Xia literati would have identified the start of the dynasty as being much earlier: Rob Linrothe, "Peripheral Visions: On Recent Finds of Tangut Buddhist Art," *Monumenta Serica* 43 (1995): 235–62. p.239.

<sup>373</sup> See Galambos, "The Northern Neighbors of the Tangut." p.74. and Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia*. p.3.

ability to fully translate Tangut texts lends the study of the Xia a historiographical advantage over the Liao, the dynasty was never granted an official history under the Yuan administration like the Liao, Song or Jin.<sup>374</sup> The Xia, also, did not produce their own history or leave many surviving contemporary records of their own political position.<sup>375</sup> Like the Liao then, our current picture of the Western Xia is heavily reliant on Chinese language sources, particularly the histories of both the Liao and Song. Given that the nature of Song-Xia relations were equally as turbulent as those between the Song and Liao, it is a picture that is often correspondingly bleak.<sup>376</sup> It is also important to note that after a treaty in 1044, Song envoys only ever travelled as far as Yuzhou, just north of the Song-Xia border and therefore had little direct experience of the Xia state from the inside, leaving the Song literati's written impressions of the dynasty less informed than those on the Liao.<sup>377</sup>

Prior scholarship has often viewed the fates of the three dynasties of Liao, Song and Xia as inextricably linked, and Wright has expressed surprise that there is yet to be a monograph published on this tripartite relationship.<sup>378</sup> This being said, brief chronological accounts of the key events in these relationships can be found in both English and Chinese language

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<sup>374</sup> A fact that Chan has partly attributed to the fact that they kept all of their dynastic records in Tangut, thus preventing the Yuan historians from creating such a work: Chan, "Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories." This argument is also directly supported by Dunnell's assessment of the Tangut script as 'enormously complex and dense' in a bid to make it 'impenetrable to outsiders': Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia*. p.38.

<sup>375</sup> Ruth Dunnell, "Translating History from Tangut Buddhist Texts," *Asia Major* 22, no. 1 (2009): 41–78. p.45.

<sup>376</sup> Galambos, "The Northern Neighbors of the Tangut." p.76.

<sup>377</sup> Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia*. p.142.

<sup>378</sup> Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China: Sung's Foreign Relations with Kitan Liao*. p.5. For more on the linked nature of the three dynasties see 朱筱新 Zhu Xiaoxin, "The Role of the Liao in the Xia-Song Relationship (评辽在夏、宋关系中的作用)," *Ningxia Daxue Xuebao* 宁夏大学学报, 34 (1988): 54–58. p.54.

scholarship.<sup>379</sup> Although never officially identified as equals by either the Liao or Song, by the time of the proclamation of Yuanhao (Xia Jingzong) as their first emperor in 1038, the Xia had already established marital relations with the Liao imperial family (1028) and negotiated a treaty with the Song that identified them as an independent state (1006).<sup>380</sup> The respect shown by both of the other dynasties towards the Liao in this three-way political relationship can be witnessed in the Song request for the Liao emperor to mediate in the peace negotiations between the Xia and Song after a conflict between the two in the 1030s.<sup>381</sup> As late as the end of the eleventh century as well, when the Liao have traditionally been seen as already in decline, the Xia still requested Liao aid in a campaign against the Song.<sup>382</sup> Certainly, there is no evidence that the Xia viewed the Song as any more of a legitimate political power than the Liao.<sup>383</sup>

The egalitarian nature of the negotiations between the three powers defies the rhetoric towards universal rule espoused by each party in their own official documents. As we witnessed with Breuker's analysis of Koryŏ-Liao relations earlier in the chapter, plurality of understanding may have been the order of the day. In their negotiations with the Song, the Xia finally agreed to refer to themselves as *chen* or 'servant/minister' in official correspondence but retained the right to use their own imperial titles for domestic use.<sup>384</sup> Dunnell also highlights the example of a Xia inscription of the late eleventh century which

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<sup>379</sup> Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia*. pp.xix-xxiii and 刘建丽 Liu Jianli, "On the Relationship between Xixia and Liao Dynasty (西夏与辽朝关系述论)," *Ningcheng Daxue Xuebao* 遼寧大學學報, 2, no. 2 (2005): 91–96.

<sup>380</sup> Liu Jianli, "On the Relationship between Xixia and Liao Dynasty (西夏与辽朝关系述论)." Liu. pp.91-92.

<sup>381</sup> Tao, "Yu Ching and Sung Policies toward Liao and Hsia, 1042 — 1044." p.115.

<sup>382</sup> Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia*. 74.

<sup>383</sup> Observing the timeline of key events in the Xia provided by Dunnell, it seems that the Liao and Song also played a roughly equal role in these, with the Liao being mentioned 18 times to the Song's 22: Dunnell.pp. xxi-xxiv

<sup>384</sup> Dunnell. p.45.

utilises a combination of Xia and Liao reign dates, so as not to offend any potential Liao observers, as further evidence of this ambiguity with regards to universal rule.<sup>385</sup> This ‘plurality’ also extended to the people on the ground. As with Standen’s work on the Liao-Song border zone, Galambos has proposed that the constantly shifting Xia borders (enforced by changing political developments with the Liao and Song) led to allegiances primarily based on local connections rather than any sense of ethnic or imperial loyalty.<sup>386</sup>

In their own Tangut writings though, the Xia did often try to move past the traditional historical rhetoric of universality used by the other dynasties when trying to describe their own contemporary situation. Galambos presents an interesting case of a surviving Tangut translation of a Chinese language military treatise, originally attributed to Zhuge Liang, called the *Jiangyuan*. In the translation, the traditional Sinitic worldview of being surrounded on four sides by the four barbarian tribes of the *Yi*, *Man*, *Rong* and *Di*, is replaced with a scaled down version in which the only barbarians mentioned are the *Yi* to the north.<sup>387</sup> In geographical terms, if Xia territory represented the centre of the world then the Liao and, later, the Jin would have taken position as the eastern barbarians or *Di* in this worldview. The absence in the text of the *Di* therefore suggests that the Xia did not consider their eastern neighbours to be barbarian (or for that matter their western and southern neighbours in Tibet and the Song respectively).<sup>388</sup> It seems that the change in language allowed the Xia to avoid many of the Chinese historiographical tropes that affected the other polities of the period.

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<sup>385</sup> The inscription in question is T.8. erected to celebrate a ceremony at Liangzhou: Dunnell. p.142.

<sup>386</sup> Galambos, “The Northern Neighbors of the Tangut.” p.77.

<sup>387</sup> Galambos. p.73.

<sup>388</sup> Galambos. p.104.

This lack of adherence to the traditional worldview of the classical texts may partly be down to the idea, put forward by Dunnell, that the Xia identified themselves primarily as a Buddhist rather than a Confucian state.<sup>389</sup> This is evidenced not only by the preponderance of surviving translations of Buddhist texts at the expense of the Confucian classics but also in the way that the dynasty claimed legitimacy through descent from the Northern Wei dynasty, a polity famous for their patronage of Buddhism. Dunnell also points to the fact that, unlike in the Liao, the Xia did not rule over a population who were already versed in the tenets of Confucian rule.<sup>390</sup> Alongside this, Linrothe has noted that it would have taken imperial investment on a massive scale to fund all of the Buddhist temples and pagodas constructed under the Xia, as well as the rituals and translation projects that took place at these sites.<sup>391</sup>

Franke has suggested that Buddhism has long been seen as a means of imperial legitimization - especially amongst dynasties that are seen as having come from a traditionally non-‘Chinese’ background or ethnicity - due to its origins in India being beyond anywhere ever considered a part of ‘China’.<sup>392</sup> While this may have played a part, Dunnell argues that Buddhism was so intertwined with the affairs of the Xia state that it is impossible to study one without reference to the other.<sup>393</sup> With no surviving evidence of Tangut Buddhism prior to the tenth century, however, it seems probable that their neighbours may also have played a role in Buddhism’s explosion of popularity under the Xia.<sup>394</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia*. p.4.

<sup>390</sup> Dunnell. 44.

<sup>391</sup> Linrothe, “Peripheral Visions: On Recent Finds of Tangut Buddhist Art.” p.241.

<sup>392</sup> See: Herbert Franke, *From Tribal Chieftain to Universal Emperor and God: The Legitimation of the Yuan Dynasty* (Munich: Verlag der Baerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1978). p.56. as well as Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.23. for more specific reference to the advantage of Buddhism in this respect to the Liao.

<sup>393</sup> Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia*. p.4.

<sup>394</sup> The evidence for pre-tenth century Tangut Buddhism is referenced in: Solonin, “Buddhist Connections between the Liao and Xixia: Preliminary Considerations.”



The Xia appear to have been willing to take on influences from far and wide in their pursuit of greater Buddhist learning. Monks from the traditional Buddhist heartland of India were active within the Xia polity and the dynasty also seems to have taken an active interest in the Tibetan tradition that was growing during this period.<sup>395</sup> Linrothe notes how, at a single site, Buddhist paintings created by Xia artists can be found painted in what he refers to as both ‘Himalayan’ and ‘Chinese’ styles.<sup>396</sup> Much of the direct imperial investment, however, was put into diplomatic missions attempting to acquire a full version of the Buddhist canon.<sup>397</sup> On no less than four occasions (1031, 1035, 1055, 1058), the Xia requested a copy of the *Kaibao* edition of the Tripitaka from the Song who eventually acquiesced to their request in 1063. There are no records of similar attempts to acquire a copy of the Kitan Tripitaka during this period, despite the fact that it would have been completed before 1055.<sup>398</sup>

This does not mean that the Xia were not influenced by developments in Liao Buddhism. Solonin has remarked that Xia Buddhist writings and teachings were in no way a replica of those produced under the Song, being based primarily on Huayan Buddhism rather than the Chan school that was gaining favour in the Song during this period.<sup>399</sup> Instead, Huayan was much more prominent in the Liao and the works of Huayan monks under Liao patronage such

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<sup>395</sup> Dunnell, “Translating History from Tangut Buddhist Texts.” p.43. and Linrothe, “Peripheral Visions: On Recent Finds of Tangut Buddhist Art.” p.236.

<sup>396</sup> Linrothe, “Peripheral Visions: On Recent Finds of Tangut Buddhist Art.” p.243.

<sup>397</sup> Linrothe, p.241.

<sup>398</sup> Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia*, p.xxi and p.34.

<sup>399</sup> Solonin, “Khitan Influences and the Formation of the Tangut Buddhist State.” p.236. and Kirill. J. Solonin, “Hongzhou Buddhism in Xixia and the Heritage of Zongmi (780-841): A Tangut Source,” *Asia Major* 16, no. 2 (2003): 57–103. p.59.

as Daoshen, Zongmi and Tongli were widely translated and circulated within the Xia.<sup>400</sup> There are also records of a Xia embassy of 1067 bringing Uighur monks, a golden Buddha and Sanskrit sutras to the Liao southern capital of Yanjing (now Beijing) as well as an offering of palm leaf sutras in a later mission of 1095.<sup>401</sup> All of which suggests that, rather than becoming sinicised (at least in terms of Buddhism) by the Song, the Xia were drawing just as heavily on the Liao Buddhist tradition, even going so far as to reinterpret Chan Buddhist texts in light of Huayan teachings received from the Liao.<sup>402</sup> This state of affairs had led Solonin to comment that the Liao-Xia Buddhist intercourse demands further scholarly input to better understand the traditions in both dynasties.<sup>403</sup>

### 1.3.5. Liao-Kara-Khanid:

Owen Lattimore once described the western regions of what is now China in Xinjiang and Gansu, as a ‘pivot around which revolve politics, power, and the fates of men’.<sup>404</sup> The period between the tenth to the twelfth centuries in this region, however, has been noted by Biran as being ‘serially overlooked’ (falling between the Tang-Abbasid exchange and the conquest of the Mongols both of which have received far greater exposure).<sup>405</sup> Although this section is labelled as the Liao-Kara-Khanid relationship, the Liao’s initial contact with the regions

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<sup>400</sup> Solonin, “Buddhist Connections between the Liao and Xixia: Preliminary Considerations.” p.119. and Solonin, “Khitan Influences and the Formation of the Tangut Buddhist State.” p.241-242. and Kirill. J. Solonin, “The Great Master Tōnglǐ: The Texts by a Liao Buddhist Master among the Khara-Khoto Findings,” 2016.

<sup>401</sup> Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia*. p.60 and p.77.

<sup>402</sup> Solonin, “Khitan Influences and the Formation of the Tangut Buddhist State.” p.236.

<sup>403</sup> Solonin. p.235.

<sup>404</sup> Owen Lattimore, “At the Crossroads of Inner Asia,” *Pacific Affairs* 23, no. 1 (1950): 34–45. p.45.

<sup>405</sup> Biran, “Unearthing the Liao Dynasty’s Relations with the Muslim World: Migrations, Diplomacy, Commerce, and Mutual Perceptions.” p.221. Michal Biran, “The Qarakhanids’ Eastern Exchange: Preliminary Notes on the Silk Roads in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,” in *Complexity of Interaction Along the Eurasian Steppe Zone in the First Millenium CE*, ed. Jan. Bemmann and Michael. Schmauder (Bonn: Bonn, 2015), 575–95. p.576.

directly to the west of the Liao polity would have been with the Kingdom of Khotan (56-1006), which had existed from the mid-first century. Khotan was a trading hub, nurturing close ties with the Buddhist centres at Dunhuang, as well as receiving varying degrees of influence from both the Tang and Tibet from the seventh to the ninth centuries.<sup>406</sup> Although exchange between the Liao and Khotan must have taken place, this period has received next to no attention in either primary or secondary material. Even after Khotan's eventual conquest by the Kara-Khanids, the situation does not improve dramatically.<sup>407</sup>

In recent years, and across a series of articles, Biran has attempted to recreate the exchange networks between the Liao and the Kara-Khanids.<sup>408</sup> One of the major problems from a historical perspective, she states, is that the two dynasties existed on the periphery of each other's geographical and cultural worlds, the 'Islamic' and the 'Sinitic'.<sup>409</sup> This has led to each of the two referring to the other in generalisations representing this other cultural zone rather than specific terminology representing the polity in question.<sup>410</sup> There is still debate as to what Chinese characters were used to refer to the Kara-Khanids, with *Dashi* (大食) seeming to be the preference of the Liao, while the Song used this same term to describe the Abbasid Caliphate.<sup>411</sup> Equally, although the Liao are known as *Khatā* in Islamic sources of

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<sup>406</sup> Sam Van Schaik, "Red Faced Barbarians, Benign Despots and Drunken Masters: Khotan as a Mirror to Tibet," 2015. p.17.

<sup>407</sup> Other than just before Khotan's conquest, when the *Liaoshi* records them requesting support from the Liao against the Kara-Khanids: *Liaoshi* 12:133-136. See also: Biran, "The Qarakhanids' Eastern Exchange: Preliminary Notes on the Silk Roads in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries." p.579.

<sup>408</sup> See particularly: Biran, "Unearthing the Liao Dynasty's Relations with the Muslim World: Migrations, Diplomacy, Commerce, and Mutual Perceptions.", Biran, "The Qarakhanids' Eastern Exchange: Preliminary Notes on the Silk Roads in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries." And Biran, "Kitan Migrations in Eurasia (10th – 14th Centuries)."

<sup>409</sup> Biran, "Unearthing the Liao Dynasty's Relations with the Muslim World: Migrations, Diplomacy, Commerce, and Mutual Perceptions." p.222.

<sup>410</sup> Biran. p.222.

<sup>411</sup> Another alternative is *Heihan* as discussed in: Biran, "The Qarakhanids' Eastern Exchange: Preliminary Notes on the Silk Roads in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries." p.576.

the period, this term is extended to the Liao's Kitan successors, the Kara-Khitai, and eventually becomes conflated with the wider Sinitic world – eventually becoming a synonym for the concept of China more generally.<sup>412</sup> This is a situation that traders from the Liao took full advantage of in the Islamic world, selling their own goods as 'Chinese' as this often led to a higher valuation.<sup>413</sup>

Political ties between the two polities came in the form of exchanges of envoys in 1015, 1020 and 1021. Gifts of ivory were recorded as arriving from the Kara-Khitai and there would also later be a marriage alliance between Qadr Kahn, the Kara-Khanid ruler of Khotan, and a Liao princess.<sup>414</sup> The Liao also used the Kara-Khanids as a platform to send embassies further afield to the Ghaznavids in 1026.<sup>415</sup> Exchange and trade occurred at an unofficial level as well, with Islamic goods such as glass, rock crystal and amber all being found within Liao tombs.<sup>416</sup> Biran has recorded that there is evidence of Kitan migration west prior to the fall of the Liao dynasty.<sup>417</sup>

Skaiff has also noted that the area around Khotan and Dunhuang (the latter also subsumed under the umbrella of a larger power in the Western Xia in 1036) was a hotbed of cultural interaction in the tenth century, especially in the field of Buddhism.<sup>418</sup> The variety of

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<sup>412</sup> Biran, "Unearthing the Liao Dynasty's Relations with the Muslim World: Migrations, Diplomacy, Commerce, and Mutual Perceptions." p.223.

<sup>413</sup> Biran. p.241.

<sup>414</sup> Hansen, "International Gifting and the Kitan World, 907–1125." p.289.

<sup>415</sup> Biran, "The Qarakhanids' Eastern Exchange: Preliminary Notes on the Silk Roads in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries." p.578.

<sup>416</sup> Hansen, "International Gifting and the Kitan World, 907–1125." p.292.

<sup>417</sup> Biran, "Unearthing the Liao Dynasty's Relations with the Muslim World: Migrations, Diplomacy, Commerce, and Mutual Perceptions." p.228.

<sup>418</sup> Sam Van Schaik and Jacob Dalton, "Where Chan and Tantra Meet," in *The Silk Road*, ed. Valerie Hansen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 63–71. p.63.

manuscripts unearthed at the Dunhuang caves illustrate that there were monks working in Tibetan, Uighur and Khotanese operating in the area, thereby providing the Liao with a gateway to a variety of different schools of Buddhism and Buddhist learning.<sup>419</sup> As we have already witnessed in the Western Xia section of this chapter, the Liao also played a part in this interaction as seen in the Liao influenced Western Xia Buddhist texts found at Dunhuang recorded by Solonin.<sup>420</sup>

### 1.3.6. Liao-Tibet:

After the fall of the Tibetan Empire in 842, this period in Tibetan history is traditionally known as the ‘Era of Fragmentation’ and lasts throughout the Liao period.<sup>421</sup> Unlike the historical evidence from the Tang and its later histories, witnessed during the dynastic period, where Tibet reached relatively egalitarian familial terms with the Tang dynasts, there is a marked decline in the historical coverage of Tibet in the tenth and eleventh centuries.<sup>422</sup> Given there was no major recognised political body in Tibet during the Liao, it is perhaps unsurprising that there is no evidence of direct contact at a political level between the Liao and Tibet. Exchange is instead witnessed primarily in the field of Buddhism through intermediaries such as the Western Xia and the central Asian Buddhist centres of Khotan and Dunhuang where Tibetan monks frequently practiced.<sup>423</sup> The prevalence of Huayan teachings

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<sup>419</sup> Schaik, “Red Faced Barbarians, Benign Despots and Drunken Masters: Khotan as a Mirror to Tibet.” p.17.

<sup>420</sup> Solonin, “Khitan Influences and the Formation of the Tangut Buddhist State.”

<sup>421</sup> Sam Van Schaik and Imre Galambos, *Manuscripts and Travellers: The Sino-Tibetan Documents of a Tenth-Century Buddhist Pilgrim* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011).

<sup>422</sup> Yihong Pan, “The Sino-Tibetan Treaties in the Tang Dynasty,” *T’oung Pao* 78, no. 1 (1992): 116–61. p.148.

<sup>423</sup> For Western Xia: Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia*. p.23. For Khotan and Dunhuang: Schaik, “Red Faced Barbarians, Benign Despots and Drunken Masters: Khotan as a Mirror to Tibet.” p.17.

in the Liao though, would suggest that Tibetan Buddhism – which was focussed mainly on Vajrayana teachings – was not one of the Liao’s major Buddhist influences.<sup>424</sup>

### **1.3.7. Liao-Uighur:**

Although the Uighur Khaganate (744-840) officially ended in 840, two smaller Uighur Kingdoms still existed during the Liao period known as the Gansu Uighur Kingdom (848-1036) and the Kingdom of Qocho (856-1369). There is no officially recorded diplomatic correspondence between the Liao and either of these kingdoms but, in 1001 there is a record of unspecified ‘Uighurs’ sending an Indian monk and skilled doctors to the Liao as a gift.<sup>425</sup> After their conquest of the Gansu Uighur Kingdom in 1036, the Western Xia also sent Uighur monks as a gift to the Liao in 1067.<sup>426</sup> This again demonstrates the Liao’s interest in Buddhist learning, something that was reciprocated in turn by the Uighurs: fragments of Buddhist scriptures of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries found in the Turfan region of the Kingdom of Qocho, have been demonstrated by Kitsudo to have been based primarily on the Liao Tripitaka rather than any of its contemporaries.<sup>427</sup>

The Uighurs of the Liao period, however, were more well known as traders, travellers and cultural intermediaries than they were for either of the two kingdoms they created.<sup>428</sup> Uighurs were used as translators for Buddhist texts in Khotan and Dunhuang, perhaps precipitating

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<sup>424</sup> For more on Huayan in the Liao, see: Kirill. J. Solonin, “The ‘Perfect Teaching’ and Liao Sources of Tangut Chan Buddhism: A Study of Jiexing Zhaoxin Tu,” *Asia Major* 26, no. 1 (2013): 79–120. p.119.

<sup>425</sup> Kitsudo, “Liao Influence on Uighur Buddhism.” p.227.

<sup>426</sup> Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia*. p.60.

<sup>427</sup> Kitsudo, “Liao Influence on Uighur Buddhism.” p.242.

<sup>428</sup> Kitsudo. p.227.

the choice of Uighur monks as a gift from the Western Xia.<sup>429</sup> The Liao also established a colony for Uighur traders at their supreme capital, Shangjing. These traders were claimed by the Song envoy, Lu Tao, to not only carry out trade but also espionage on behalf of the Liao, accompanying Liao diplomatic envoys on missions to the Song for that express purpose.<sup>430</sup> The Liao certainly seem to have drawn upon the Uighurs at the capital for more than just trade as the Kitan script, formulated at Abaoji's instruction, seems to use the Uighur script as its foundation.<sup>431</sup>

### 1.3.8. Liao-Wuyue:

Like the Liao, the Kingdom of Wuyue has its official start date in 907, coinciding neatly with the end of the Tang dynasty. Based in what would now be Zhejiang province, Wuyue seems to have enjoyed close political ties with the Liao until the kingdom was incorporated into the Song in 978.<sup>432</sup> According to the *Liaoshi*, tribute is recorded as being received by the Liao from Wuyue on six separate occasions in 915, 920, 923, 932, 941 and 943.<sup>433</sup> Despite this, there is currently no evidence of any Liao envoys travelling to Wuyue or any further communication or exchange between the two. Contact and tribute to the Liao may just have been part of a wider diplomatic strategy of positive engagement with their neighbours to ensure their survival given a relative lack of military strength. This is evidenced in the fact that Wuyue is also recorded as having sent envoys to the Song, Bohai, Silla, Koryŏ and Heian

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<sup>429</sup> Schaik, "Red Faced Barbarians, Benign Despots and Drunken Masters: Khotan as a Mirror to Tibet." p.17.

<sup>430</sup> Kitsudo, "Liao Influence on Uighur Buddhism." p.227.

<sup>431</sup> Kane, *The Kitan Language and Script*. p.XIII.

<sup>432</sup> Edmund Worthy, "Diplomacy for Survival: Domestic and Foreign Relations of Wü Yueh, 907-978," in *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbours, 10th-14th Centuries*, ed. Morris. Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 17-44. p.35.

<sup>433</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. pp.346-351.

as well as the Liao.<sup>434</sup> The rulers of Wuyue were also renowned for their Buddhist patronage, however, so there may have been some level of religious exchange between the two polities.<sup>435</sup>

### **1.3.9. The Liao and East Asian Buddhism:**

Given all of the above evidence in each of these individual case studies, it becomes nigh impossible to deny that the Liao polity played a significant role in the East Asian networks of political, religious and cultural exchange throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Although this chapter could not hope to cover the complete spectrum of the Liao's political relationship with their neighbours, it has still demonstrated that the previous positioning of the Liao polity on the periphery of 'Chinese' history does not reflect their actual position in East Asia as a whole. The sinification model of a cultured 'Chinese' centre (in this period represented by the Song) from which all other groups on the periphery drew their primary influence is simply untenable. Whether we agree with Rossabi's proposition that East Asia during this period consisted of a community of equally sovereign independent states, or whether the Song and Liao would have taken precedence over others as suggested by Wright, either model lends the Liao considerable political agency within the region.<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> Worthy, "Diplomacy for Survival: Domestic and Foreign Relations of Wü Yueh, 907-978." p.36.

<sup>435</sup> Worthy. p.24.

<sup>436</sup> Berkeley Los Angeles Oxford, *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbours 10th-14th Centuries*, ed. Morris. Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). Chapter 1 and Wright, "The Sung-Kitan War of A.D. 1004-1005 and the Treaty of Shan-Yuan." pp.1-3.



Wright also notes that, alongside their preferential treatment in their dealings with the Song, the Liao can be (and have been) witnessed as part of a Song-Liao-Xia trifecta of powers that rose to prominence in the eleventh century.<sup>437</sup> It is interesting to note though that the secondary literature on Koryŏ views the significant trifecta of powers in the region during this period as being the Liao, Song and Koryŏ, substituting out a role for the Western Xia.<sup>438</sup> Whether it be Liao-Song-Xia, or Liao-Song-Koryŏ, in each of these models the Liao remain a constant. In addition, the evidence explored earlier in this chapter would indicate that both Koryŏ and the Western Xia's political dealings with the Liao seem to have been at least as significant as their relationship with those of the Song.<sup>439</sup>

While the military and political impact of the Liao has never really been in doubt, it is the polity's cultural impact that normally falls victim to the narrative of 'sinification'. In each of the relationships with their neighbours explored above, however, there is one area where the Liao have repeatedly been shown to be a major influence over their neighbours - Buddhism. Much like Biran has noted for the Yuan, the Liao do not seem to have been a passive medium through which Buddhist contacts may have taken place across East Asia but rather, they had direct agency in the direction and dissemination of new ideas and teachings.<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> See Tao, "Yu Ching and Sung Policies toward Liao and Hsia, 1042 — 1044." p.115., Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China: Sung's Foreign Relations with Kitan Liao*. p.5. and Zhu Xiaoxin, "The Role of the Liao in the Xia-Song Relationship (评辽在夏、宋关系中的作用)."

<sup>438</sup> See Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170*. And Lippit, "Goryeo Buddhist Painting in an Interregional Context."

<sup>439</sup> There is a great timeline at the beginning of Dunnell's book on the Western Xia in which the Liao feature just as heavily as the Song in the key events of the dynasty: Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia*.

<sup>440</sup> Michal Biran, "The Mongol Empire and Inter-Civilizational Exchange," in *Expanding Webs of Exchange and Conflict, 500CE-1500CE*, ed. Benjamin Kedar and Merry Weisner-Hanks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). p.541.

The studies thus far into Liao foreign relations have almost universally gone on to support this point. In the Japanese archipelago under the Heian for instance, Liao esoteric rituals formed the basis of the Nyoho Sonsho, a ritual that would outlast the Liao dynasty itself in their overseas neighbour.<sup>441</sup> In the Korean peninsula, the carving of the second Koryŏ Tripitaka drew on the Liao edition of the canon at the expense of all others.<sup>442</sup> Equally, the Kitan Tripitaka - amongst other Liao Buddhist texts – provided both the direction and impetus in Buddhist scholarship in the West Uighur Kingdom.<sup>443</sup> In the Western Xia, Solonin has even gone so far as to argue that Liao Buddhism may have provided the very foundation upon which the dynasty's own state sponsored Buddhism was built.<sup>444</sup> Steinhardt has suggested that the Buddhist art and architecture of the Liao represented the pinnacle of contemporary craftsmanship.<sup>445</sup> Given the weight of evidence, Chikusa has proposed that the Liao may even have represented the centre of the East Asian Buddhist world during this period.<sup>446</sup>

This paints a picture far removed from that described by Ledderose who, as recently as 2010, proposed that 'Buddhism was a field where the cultural superiority of the Han Chinese was most evident' within the Liao polity.<sup>447</sup> This statement is unusual, not just for the weight of evidence that has been presented here against it, but also because, traditionally, the post-Tang 'Han Chinese' world is seen as one where Buddhism was in decline.<sup>448</sup> Although there is also

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<sup>441</sup> Kim, "The Hidden Link: Tracing Liao Buddhism in Shingon Ritual."

<sup>442</sup> Buswell, "Sugi's 'Collation Notes' to the Koryŏ Buddhist Canon and Their Significance for Buddhist Textual Criticism."

<sup>443</sup> Kitsudo, "Liao Influence on Uighur Buddhism."

<sup>444</sup> Solonin, "Khitan Influences and the Formation of the Tangut Buddhist State."

<sup>445</sup> Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.7.

<sup>446</sup> Masa'aki Chikusa, *Sō Gen Bukkyō Bunkashi Kenkyō* 宋元想隣 文泌別研究 (Tokyo: Kyuko shoin, 2000). p.99

<sup>447</sup> Ledderose, "Make Sutras, Not War: The Stele of 965/1005AD at Cloud Dwelling Monastery." p.161.

<sup>448</sup> See Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.291. Although the idea of decline in this period may be primarily down to a lack of translation of key Buddhist texts in the Song rather than a

little evidence for pre-dynastic engagement with Buddhism among the Kitan, as early as 902 the first Buddhist temple had been constructed in the Liaoxi steppes at Longhua, the first of Abaoji's newly constructed cities.<sup>449</sup> Alongside Confucianism and Daoism, Buddhism became officially recognised by the Liao in 918. It was Buddhism, though, that fast outstripped the other two, both in terms of elite patronage and popular support.

By the reign of Liao Shengzong (982-1031), it is estimated that up to ten percent of the population may have been practising monks or nuns serving within Buddhist temples.<sup>450</sup> Wittfogel and Feng also note the Buddhist actions of other Liao emperors, with Xingzong (1031-1055) accepting the five great Buddhist commandments and personally organising discussions of Buddhist doctrines, and Daozong (1055-1101) taking the time to both translate Buddhist scriptures and write his own commentaries.<sup>451</sup> Kitsudo has described Buddhism as occupying a position in the Liao equivalent to that of a 'national religion'.<sup>452</sup>

The power of the 'sinification' model over studies of East Asian Buddhism, however, remains difficult to avoid. A study of Koryō Buddhist painting by Lippit serves as one of the best examples of how this model has affected our understanding of the Buddhist culture of this period. Lippit's work demonstrated that Buddhist paintings produced in Koryō, that were discovered in Japan, were repeatedly being attributed to master painters from the Song by art

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reflection of the actual popularity of the religion as a whole as argued in: Sen, "The Revival and Failure of Buddhist Translations during the Song Dynasty." p.27.

<sup>449</sup> Lin, "Perceptions of Liao Urban Landscapes: Political Practices and Nomadic Empires." p.237. It is also interesting to note here that there are no surviving texts of Buddhist works translated into Khitan: Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.35.

<sup>450</sup> Di Cosmo, "Liao History and Society." p.20 and Mote, *Imperial China: 900-1800*. p.82.

<sup>451</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society Liao (907-1125)*. p.294.

<sup>452</sup> Kitsudo, "Liao Influence on Uighur Buddhism." p.225.

historians.<sup>453</sup> Despite this, Standen has still identified Buddhism as a key area for beginning to challenge the ‘sinification’ model.<sup>454</sup> This is because Buddhism finds its origin in India, only entering China via intermediaries in Parthia in the first century BCE.<sup>455</sup> While it has been argued that Buddhist related materials were adapted after their arrival in China and are thus a ‘sinification’ of these outside influences, Standen points to architecture as an area in which the arrival of Buddhism made a visible mark on the Chinese landscape:

We can see this best in the transformation of the largely single story, horizontal architecture of China by the addition of thousands of multi-level pagodas: tall, thin, visible for miles; permanent symbols of change.<sup>456</sup>

The photo in Fig. 1.5, taken in Ningcheng in 2015, shows that this particular change can still be witnessed in the architectural landscape of China today. While it may have been their visible nature that first drew me to pagodas as the basis of this study (Fig. 1.5), it is their status as a Buddhist monument appearing throughout East Asia that allows them to provide the framework for reassessing the Liao polity in a regional context.

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<sup>453</sup> Lippit, “Goryeo Buddhist Painting in an Interregional Context.”

<sup>454</sup> Standen, *Demystifying China*. p.38.

<sup>455</sup> Richard Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999). p.53.

<sup>456</sup> Standen, *Demystifying China*. p.38.

## **Chapter 2 – Pagodas, Ta (塔) and a HEAP of challenges:**

As an architectural monument, giving expression and accent to the landscape of China, nothing figures more prominently than the *t'a* or pagoda.

Liang Sicheng<sup>457</sup>

The pagoda has always held an important place in the architectural landscapes of East Asia. Steinhardt has recently described pagodas as: the ‘monument through which Buddhism first proclaimed itself to China’ and views them as having an importance that ‘far exceeds any patron, lineage or location’.<sup>458</sup> These structures therefore provide the perfect means by which to explore the regional and chronological context of the Liao polity. By comparing the features of Liao pagodas with those constructed in other periods and places, we can bear witness to how designs may have developed and spread over time between polities. In doing so, it is hoped that we may begin to reconstruct the position that the Liao polity may have held within the religious, political and cultural networks of East Asia.

China’s two oldest extant buildings are pagodas and the archaeological record confirms that this building type represented the strongest visual display of Buddhism in China in the centuries following its arrival.<sup>459</sup> Be it early foundations in third century Xinjiang, or the

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<sup>457</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.259.

<sup>458</sup> Nancy Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2014). p.209.

<sup>459</sup> These are the Songyuesi Pagoda (嵩岳寺塔) completed in 523 and the Simen Pagoda (四门塔) completed in 544. Please note that I am referring to above-ground architecture only in this statement as there are extant tombs

240m tall example that was recorded as having been built under the Northern Wei – pagodas were a key feature of Chinese Buddhism from its earliest days.<sup>460</sup> The Sui reportedly built three pagodas in each of their eighty administrative districts and, in the Tang, Buddhist temples would always have a pagoda at their centre.<sup>461</sup>

Pagodas have certainly not been excluded from the growing interest in studies of Chinese architecture.<sup>462</sup> In 1984, Zhang Yuhuan estimated that there were over a thousand extant pagodas within the PRC but research from the following three decades has led to this number being revised to somewhere between two and three thousand individual examples.<sup>463</sup> On top of this, there are also fifteen major *talin* (塔林), or ‘pagoda forests’, scattered throughout China. The largest of these sites alone, situated at Shaolinsi in Henan, contains two-hundred-and-forty-eight pagodas.<sup>464</sup>

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that have been excavated from much earlier periods. For a brief introduction to early tomb architecture in China, see: Qinghua Guo, “Tomb Architecture of Dynastic China: Old and New Questions,” *Architectural History* 47 (2004): 1–24.

<sup>460</sup> The claim for outstanding visual representation and details of these early examples of pagodas in China (amongst others) can be found in: Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*. p.209-213. The tall Northern Wei pagoda was built at Yongningsi in Luoyang and is no longer extant. The estimate for the height is based on the a conversion of the buildings recorded height of ninety *zhang*, see: Steinhardt. p.200. For further discussion of this pagoda, see: Tracy Miller, “Perfecting the Mountain: On the Morphology of Towering Temples in East Asia,” *Journal of Chinese Architecture History* 10 (2014): 419–49.

<sup>461</sup> 张驭寰 Zhang Yuhuan, *Chinese Buddhist Architecture*, 中国佛教建筑 (Beijing: Dangdai Zhongguo Chubanshe 当代中国出版社, 2012). pp.24-26.

<sup>462</sup> This interest was fuelled by a dramatic increase in archaeological fieldwork in China, including of architectural sites, from the 1980s onwards and the granting of permission for international archaeological teams working in China from 1991: Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*. p.3.

<sup>463</sup> For the original estimate: 张驭寰 Zhang Yuhuan, *Famous Pagodas of China*, 中国名塔 (Beijing: Zhongguo Luyou Chubanshe 中国旅游出版社, 1984). p.51. For the more recent estimates see: 程鹏 Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*, 中国古塔大观 (Hefei: Hefei Gongye Daxue Chubanshe (合肥工业大学出版社), 2015). p.5. Cheng Peng’s figures here are based on extensive survey work but note that they do not include miniature pagodas or pagodas that are part of a pagoda forest. A full list of the pagodas surveyed in this volume can be found in Chapter 15 - pp.272-336.

<sup>464</sup> For the recorded figure of 248 see: Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.14. For an overview of the pagodas at the Shaolin Temple see: 喬勻 Qiao Yun, *Chinese Historical Architecture*, 中國古代建築 (Taipei: Muma Wenhua 木馬文化, 2003). p.150.

It is not just the numbers that make pagodas special either. At any given point in time, from the Eastern Han dynasty through to the early twentieth century, the tallest building in China would have been a pagoda.<sup>465</sup> This remains true not just for China but across our entire survey region - covering China, Japan, North Korea and South Korea. The tallest of these mega-structures to survive to this day, the Liaodi Pagoda in Dingzhou, Hebei Province, stands at eighty-four metres tall and dates back to the Song dynasty in the eleventh century.<sup>466</sup> This is a height that would not be matched by surviving religious architecture from Europe until the construction of the Cathedral of St. Peter in Bautzen, Germany in 1221.

Pagodas constructed under the Liao have always held great interest for students of Chinese architecture. There are seventy-seven extant examples that are listed as protected sites at either the provincial or national level, including a close rival in height to the *Liaodi* Pagoda – the *Daming* Pagoda in Ningcheng, Inner Mongolia, which stands at just over eighty metres tall. Zhang Yuhuan has commented that early twentieth century scholars of East Asian architectural history including both Liang Sicheng and Liu Dunzhen along with many researchers from Japan demonstrated a particular interest in pagodas constructed under the Liao.<sup>467</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> If accounts of the 240m tall Yongningsi Pagoda were true, then this would have remained unsurpassed in height globally until the construction of the Woolworth Building in New York was completed in 1913.

<sup>466</sup> It was built by the Northern Song and completed in 1055: 蕭默 Xiao Mo, *Chinese Architecture*, 中國建築 (Taipei: Fenggeshi Yishu Chuangzuofang (風格司藝術創作坊), 2015). p.124.

<sup>467</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *Chinese Buddhist Architecture*. p.30. Although not mentioned by name, the Japanese scholars and studies he was referring to are likely to be: Torii, *On Liao Culture*. and Sekino and Takeshima, *Liao-Jin Architecture and Its Buddhist Sculpture*.

There is one Liao pagoda that generates more interest than any other, however, the Yingxian Timber Pagoda (Fig. 2.1).<sup>468</sup> Built on the site of a previous Northern Wei temple, this structure has been classed alongside Mt. Wutai and the Yungang Grottoes as one of China's pre-eminent Buddhist sites.<sup>469</sup> As the only surviving pre-modern timber pagoda in China, there may have been as much academic interest expressed in the Yingxian Pagoda as all of the other individual Liao pagodas combined.<sup>470</sup> Liang Sicheng once noted that students of Chinese architecture 'could find no better building' for the study of timber construction techniques.<sup>471</sup>

As a type of structure that is reproduced across the East Asian region, as well as one that survives in large numbers to the present day – both from the Liao, as well as their contemporaries and predecessors - the pagoda seems to be a perfect means by which to explore Liao architecture within a wide regional and chronological context. Before this can be achieved, however, we first need to develop a methodology that takes into account the Liao position within the current paradigm of Chinese architectural history.

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<sup>468</sup> Also known as the 'Sakyamuni Pagoda' or 'Pagoda of Fogong Temple'.

<sup>469</sup> For the previous occupation of the site see: 劉敦楨 Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*, 中國古代建築史 (Taipei: Mingwen Shuju 明文書局, 1990). p.207. For cultural significance of the site, see: 李世溫 Li Shiwen, "Yingxian Timber Pagoda (應縣木塔)," *Zhongguo Jianzhu* (中國建築) 19 (2003): 1–45. p.1.

<sup>470</sup> For archaeology papers, see: 祁英濤 Qi Yingtao, "Some Determinations Based on Carbon-14 Dating at the Yingxian Timber Pagoda (應縣木塔幾項碳十四年代測定)," in *Record of Ancient Architecture* (古建論文記) (Beijing: Huaxia Chubanshe (華夏出版社), 1992), 133–36. 尚曉波 Shang Xiaobo, "Precious Cultural Relics Found in the Liao-Period Timber Pagoda of Fogong Monastery in Yingxian, Shanxi (山西應縣佛宮寺木塔內發現遼代珍貴文物)," *Wenwu* 文物, no. 6 (1982): 1–8. For engineering, see: Enchun Zhu et al., "Structural Performance of Dou-Gong Brackets of Yingxian Wood Pagoda Under Vertical Loading," in *World Conference on Timber Engineering*, 2012. Lam and He, "Example of Traditional Tall Timber Buildings in China – the Yingxian Pagoda." And for more wide-ranging publications, see: 李世溫 Li Shiwen, "Yingxian Timber Pagoda (應縣木塔)," 陈明达 Chen Mingda, *Yingxian Timber Pagoda*, 应县木塔 (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe (文物出版社), 1980).

<sup>471</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.243.



## 2.1. Chinese architectural history and the Liao:

Chinese architectural history is a comparatively new discipline that only began to gain traction in the early twentieth century. Steinhardt has shown that the Chinese words for both ‘architect’ (*jianzhuzhe* 建築著) and ‘architecture’ (*jianzhu* 建築) did not gain their current meaning until this point.<sup>472</sup> Unlike the ‘three perfections’ of calligraphy, painting and poetry, architecture had not historically been considered a worthwhile pursuit of the Chinese literate class.<sup>473</sup> Instead, architecture was largely thought to be the realm of anonymous craftsmen and therefore not an ‘academic’ discipline.<sup>474</sup> According to Steinhardt, this has led to a situation where Chinese architecture ‘has been studied less than the architecture of almost any other great civilisation on the globe’.<sup>475</sup> Ding has noted that, even today, the majority of China’s architectural journals do not have a focus on pre-modern structures.<sup>476</sup> Of those studies that have been produced in Chinese, only a small fraction have been translated into English.<sup>477</sup>

The first time we can see the position of ‘China’ as an independent architectural tradition in the European language literature, is with the publication of Bannister Fletcher’s *History of Architecture and the Comparative Method*. This seminal work, currently in its twentieth

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<sup>472</sup> Nancy Steinhardt, “Introduction,” in *Chinese Architecture*, ed. Nancy Steinhardt and Xinian. Fu (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 1–5. p.2.

<sup>473</sup> 梁思成 Liang Sicheng, “Why Study Chinese Architecture?,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73, no. 1 (2014): 8–11. p.9.

<sup>474</sup> Nancy Steinhardt, “The East Asian Architectural Canon in the Twenty-First Century,” in *Asian Art History in the 21st Century*, ed. Vishakha Desai (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 15–36.

<sup>475</sup> Steinhardt, “Introduction.” p.1.

<sup>476</sup> Guanghui Ding, “‘Experimental Architecture’ in China,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73, no. 1 (2014): 28–37. p.30.

<sup>477</sup> Swati Chattopadhyay, “What Is Critical about Chinese Architectural History?,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73, no. 1 (2014): 5–7. p.5

edition, was first published in 1896 and has been used as a course book for students of architectural history ever since.<sup>478</sup> The frontispiece of Fletcher's text features an image called the 'Tree of Architecture' showing a typological sequence of global building traditions (Fig. 2.2). The author's thoughts on the position of Chinese architecture within this sequence are clear, with the country being relegated to the very bottom branches of the tree and lumped together with Japan (making these the only two included countries to not have their own branch). Lai Delin has suggested that Fletcher's tree is indicative of a general attitude towards East Asian architecture at this time, where it was viewed as an unchanging historical entity that showed little, if any, development over time.<sup>479</sup>

It is in this context of the early twentieth century that the first architectural histories of East Asia were produced, with Fenollosa's *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art* being published in 1912 and the first national history of Chinese architecture being published by Boerschmann in 1925.<sup>480</sup> It is also in this context (and from these very texts) that the first international Chinese students were introduced to the study of architectural history when they moved abroad to study in the USA, Japan and Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century. Among these students were four individuals who would later become known as the 'four outstanding' (*sijie* 四杰), the progenitors of Chinese architectural history as an

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<sup>478</sup> The current edition came out in 1996, see: Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture and the Comparative Method* (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>479</sup> Delin Lai, "Idealizing a Chinese Style: Rethinking Early Writings on Chinese Architecture and the Design of the National Central Museum in Nanjing," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73, no. 1 (2014): 61–90. p.74.

<sup>480</sup> Ernest Fenollosa, *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art: An Outline History of East Asiatic Design* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1912). and: Ernst Boerschmann, *Chinesische Architektur* (Berlin: Wasmuth Verlag, 1925). Boerschmann was also the first European writer to publish a volume specifically on Chinese pagodas, see: Ernst Boerschmann, *Pagoden in China* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1931).

independent discipline: Liang Sicheng, Liu Dunzhen, Tong Jun and Yang Tingbao.<sup>481</sup> Of these four, it is Liang Sicheng who had the most impact and is often cited as the ‘grandfather of architectural history’.<sup>482</sup>

Inspired after having studied architectural theory under Paul Cret at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1920s, Liang Sicheng returned to China and learned the structural complexities of Chinese architectural forms from the carpenters employed to maintain the palaces and other ancient buildings of Beijing.<sup>483</sup> The recent rediscovery in 1919 of the *Yingzao fashi* (營造法式), a twelfth century Song dynasty manual for the construction of imperial architecture, provided a foundation upon which he could develop a new architectural history of China.<sup>484</sup> Alongside Zhu Qiqian, who discovered the text, Liang Sicheng established the ‘Society for Research in Chinese Architecture’ in 1929 - a society that would be responsible for the majority of both the field surveys and publications on Chinese architecture in the subsequent two decades.

Steinhardt has indicated that the combination of a limited group of key figures, working primarily from a single key historical text in the form of the *Yingzao fashi*, has had a

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<sup>481</sup> The importance of these figures to the field is explored in: Steinhardt, “Chinese Architectural History in the Twenty-First Century.” and Lai, “Idealizing a Chinese Style: Rethinking Early Writings on Chinese Architecture and the Design of the National Central Museum in Nanjing.”

<sup>482</sup> Li, “Writing a Modern Chinese Architectural History: Liang Sicheng and Liang Qichao.” p.34.

<sup>483</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.198.

<sup>484</sup> For more on the discovery and publication of the *Yingzao fashi* see: Qinghua Guo, “Yingzao Fashi: Twelfth-Century Chinese Building Manual,” *Architectural History* 41 (1998): 1–13. p.10. For Liang Sicheng’s annotated version of the text, see: 梁思成 Liang Sicheng, *A Commentary on the Yingzao Fashi*, 营造法式注释 (Beijing: Zhongguo Jianzhu Gongye Chubanshe 中國建築工業出版社, 2001). Further reading on the text and its construction can be found in: Jiren Feng, *Chinese Architecture and Metaphor: Song Culture in the “Yingzao Fashi” Building Manual* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2012).

significant impact on the development of the field of Chinese architectural history.<sup>485</sup>

Through the work of Liang Sicheng and Liu Dunzhen in particular, there has formed both an accepted canon of (primarily timber) Chinese historical architecture as well as an accepted methodology of how to categorise and compile a history of these structures.<sup>486</sup> The majority of publications on Chinese architectural history today are still produced by first and second generation students of these individuals and the reverence for their work has meant that they are yet to be significantly challenged.<sup>487</sup>

In an article of 1945 entitled ‘Why Study Chinese Architecture?’ (*Weishenme yanjiu zhongguo jianzhu* 为什么研究中国建筑), Liang Sicheng set out his vision for a national history of Chinese architecture.<sup>488</sup> He emphasised the uniqueness of the Chinese architectural system, claiming that extensive survey work and historical research could help to ‘extract the essential Chinese character of old architecture’.<sup>489</sup>

One effect of this was that the Chinese architectural canon became separated from the rest of the East Asian region. Steinhardt has shown that Liu Dunzhen switched from writing

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<sup>485</sup> Note that there was also a second historical building manual discovered but this dated from the Qing dynasty in the eighteenth century - the *Qing gongcheng zuofazeli* (清工程做法则例), for which Liang Sicheng also published an annotated version, see: 梁思成 Liang Sicheng, *Qing Structural Regulations* (清式营造则例) (Beijing: Society for Research in Chinese Architecture, 1934).

<sup>486</sup> Steinhardt, “Chinese Architectural History in the Twenty-First Century.” p.52. For the most recent edition of Liang Sicheng’s collected works, see: 梁思成 Liang Sicheng, *A History of Chinese Architecture*, 中国建筑史 (Tianjin: Baihua Literature and Art Publishing (百花文艺出版社), 2005). and for Liu Dunzhen’s posthumously published complete Chinese architectural history, see: Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*.

<sup>487</sup> Steinhardt, “Chinese Architectural History in the Twenty-First Century.” p.52.

<sup>488</sup> 梁思成 Liang Sicheng, “Why Study Chinese Architecture? (为什么研究中国建筑?),” *Zhongguo Yingzao Xueshe Huikan* 7, no. 1 (1944): 1–4. There was also an English translation by Yan Wenchang published as part of a special edition on China of the Journal for the Society of Architectural Historians, see: Liang Sicheng, “Why Study Chinese Architecture?”

<sup>489</sup> Translation from: Liang Sicheng, “Why Study Chinese Architecture?” p.11.

architectural histories that combined evidence from China and Japan to writing exclusively about Chinese architecture.<sup>490</sup> Another effect was that tropes from the approach to written histories of China also began to come into play in histories of architecture. For example, in a recent article introducing the field of Chinese architectural history for an international audience, Fu Xinian stated that architectural developments within China could be tied in to the rise and fall of empires in the dynastic succession.<sup>491</sup> We also witness the return of the idea of sinification, with Fu suggesting that ‘foreign’ buildings and influences gradually became ‘absorbed’ within the greater Chinese architectural canon.<sup>492</sup>

Since the creation of Liang Sicheng’s *A History of Chinese Architecture* in 1955, Steinhardt has demonstrated that almost every publication on the subject has followed the same format.<sup>493</sup> In each case, histories of Chinese architecture are organised chronologically based on dynasties or groups of dynasties. Within each chronological section, the architecture is then split into categories based on both form and function.<sup>494</sup> This format has also become the way we conceive of Chinese architecture in the English language discourse as well, not only through Liang Sicheng’s personal translation of his own work but also through sinologists, such as Mirams and Soper, whose access to the discipline came through the work of the

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<sup>490</sup> Steinhardt, “Chinese Architectural History in the Twenty-First Century.”

<sup>491</sup> Xinian Fu, “Understanding Chinese Research Work on Architectural History,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73, no. 1 (2014): 12–16. p.12.

<sup>492</sup> Fu. p.13

<sup>493</sup> Steinhardt, “Chinese Architectural History in the Twenty-First Century.” p.52. Although written in 1955 and used as teaching material at Qinghua University, *A History of Chinese Architecture* was not officially published until 1985. For more on the development and publication of this book, see: Li, “Writing a Modern Chinese Architectural History: Liang Sicheng and Liang Qichao.” pp.35-37.

<sup>494</sup> Prominent examples of works following this format include: 梁思成 Liang Sicheng, *History of Chinese Architecture* (中國建築史) (Beijing, 1985)., Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*., 蕭默 Xiao Mo, *History of Chinese Architecture*, 中國建築史 (Taipei: Wenjin Chubanshe (文津出版社), 1995). and Xinian Fu, ed., *History of Ancient Chinese Architecture (5 Volumes)*, 中國古代建築史 (Beijing: Zhongguo Jianzhu Gongye Chubanshe (中國建築工業出版社), 2003).

Society for Research in Chinese Architecture.<sup>495</sup> The most complete history of Chinese architecture yet published in English is a translation of Fu Xinian's *History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. Although the original five volume text has been condensed down to a single book, the chronological and typological divisions of the architecture from the Chinese version remain intact.<sup>496</sup>

It is not difficult to foresee the potential effect this national and chronological approach could have on the position of Liao architecture within wider studies of Chinese architectural history. Just as in general histories of China, the Liao are normally placed in the same section or volume as the Song and are often also grouped together with the Jin, and Western Xia.<sup>497</sup> The accepted Chinese dynastic succession we discussed in the previous chapter is implicitly accepted - with the Song being seen as the 'Chinese' dynasty of the period and the Liao, Jin and Xia relegated to the position of peripheral states.<sup>498</sup> While individual Liao buildings are often singled out for discussion and praise within these texts, when it comes to descriptions of the architecture of the period, it is the Song that are almost universally seen to have been the primary innovators in architectural design.<sup>499</sup> In the introduction to the 'Song, Liao and Jin' period in Qiao Yun's *Chinese Historical Architecture*, for example, the Song receive three

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<sup>495</sup> Dennis Mirams, *A Brief History of Chinese Architecture* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1940). and Laurence Sickman and Alexander Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 1960).

<sup>496</sup> Published as *Chinese Architecture* in English and co-edited by Fu and Steinhardt, see: Nancy Steinhardt and Xinian Fu, eds., *Chinese Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

<sup>497</sup> See, for example: 郭黛姮 Guo Daiheng, "The Liao, Song, Xi Xia, and Jin Dynasties," in *Chinese Architecture*, ed. Nancy Steinhardt and Xinian Fu (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 135–99.

<sup>498</sup> We can see this in the use of the characters for 'dynasty' (*dai/chao* 代/朝) to describe the Song and 'state/kingdom' (*guo* 國) to describe the Liao, for example see: Xiao Mo, *History of Chinese Architecture*, p.149.

<sup>499</sup> This is accepted across both the English and Chinese language texts, for examples see: Sickman and Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China*, p.269, Qiao Yun, *Chinese Historical Architecture*, p.119, and 郭黛姮 Guo Daiheng, *History of Ancient Chinese Architecture: Volume 3, the Song, Liao, Jin and Xixia*, ed. Xinian Fu, 中國古代建築史第三卷 (Beijing: Zhongguo Jianzhu Gongye Chubanshe (中国建筑工业出版社), 2003), p.1.

paragraphs of coverage, with the Liao and Jin limited to just a single sentence at the end.<sup>500</sup> In certain texts, Liao buildings are even covered in discussions of Song period innovation without mentioning their Liao origin.<sup>501</sup>

We also frequently witness the ‘Liao’ as a political unit being conflated with the ‘Kitan’ as a people, a situation that resulted in much of the early European language architectural literature describing them using the standard tropes of a ‘barbarian other’. Particularly egregious examples include Soper’s account of the Kitan as ‘lazy debauchees’ and Ecke’s description of a group who ‘relapsed time and again into ferocious T’ung-Hu orgies’.<sup>502</sup> In the Chinese architectural histories, the language is a little less transparent but we still see how the portrayal of the Kitan and the Liao as ‘non-Chinese’ has changed the way the dynasty is portrayed within these accounts. Guo Daiheng places the Liao lower within the framework of ‘Marxist historical materialism’ than their Song counterparts, describing them as progressing from a ‘tribal’ to a ‘fuedal’ society.<sup>503</sup> The Kitan leaders of the Liao dynasty are also, almost exclusively, believed to have taken their architectural inspiration from their ‘Chinese’ counterparts. Liao buildings are most frequently ascribed to Tang archetypes while claims of Song inspiration are also not uncommon.<sup>504</sup>

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<sup>500</sup> Qiao Yun, *Chinese Historical Architecture*. p.119.

<sup>501</sup> For example, see the coverage of the Yingxian pagoda in a section about Song architectural developments in: Qiao Yun. p.119

<sup>502</sup> See respectively: Sickman and Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China*. p.269 and Ecke, “Structural Features of the Stone Built Ting Pagoda, A Preliminary Study - Chapter II: Brick Pagodas in the Liao Style.” p.336.

<sup>503</sup> Guo Daiheng, *History of Ancient Chinese Architecture: Volume 3, the Song, Liao, Jin and Xixia*. p.5. This model is still heavily used in Chinese historical accounts and many histories are still constructed around this idea of teleological societal development, see for example the structure of: Bai Shouyi, *General History of China*.

<sup>504</sup> For examples of a Tang precedent being given for Liao architecture: Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.178. and Qiao Yun, *Chinese Historical Architecture*. p.119. For potential Song influence: Guo Daiheng, *History of Ancient Chinese Architecture: Volume 3, the Song, Liao, Jin and Xixia*. p.1.

As we witnessed in the previous chapter, the position of Liao architecture within Chinese architectural histories came to a head with the publication of the Steinhardt's *Liao Architecture* in 1997.<sup>505</sup> Not only the first monograph to focus exclusively on Liao architecture in any language, Steinhardt was also breaking new ground by actively searching for evidence of innovation within the corpus of extant Liao buildings.<sup>506</sup> This approach brought the author into a heated debate with Kuhn over the degree to which Liao architecture should be considered either an example of Kitan innovation or Chinese tradition.<sup>507</sup> Kuhn highlighted the lack of a permanent architectural tradition among the Kitan as a means to suggest that all Liao architecture should be attributed to pre-existing 'Chinese' archetypes and built by 'Chinese' builders. While we have already established the problem of who Kuhn identifies as 'Chinese', it is also worth noting that the lack of a pre-dynastic building tradition amongst the Kitan does not preclude the idea of Liao imperial involvement in the construction of architecture within the Liao polity.

We have already noted that architecture was not considered a pursuit of the literate class and the emperors of the Tang and Song were no more likely to be out bricklaying than their Liao counterparts. Kuhn himself notes that the issue of who built the historical architecture we now find across East Asia remains one of the great mysteries of the discipline, with builders conspicuous mainly for their absence from the historical record.<sup>508</sup> Despite this, no one takes

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<sup>505</sup> Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*.

<sup>506</sup> This is best witnessed in the final conclusion, see: Steinhardt, pp.403-405.

<sup>507</sup> The debate can be followed in: Kuhn, "'Liao Architecture': Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?" and Steinhardt, "A Response to Dieter Kuhn, 'Liao Architecture: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?'"

<sup>508</sup> Kuhn, "'Liao Architecture': Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?" p.339.



issue with historians attributing architectural developments to either the Tang or the Song.<sup>509</sup>

The claim that the elite stratum of Liao society could not have been just as involved in contributing to their own architectural tradition as the elites from these other polities, therefore, seems a little contrived.

The concluding chapter of *Liao Architecture* specifically focuses on the pagodas of the Liao polity.<sup>510</sup> Within this section, Steinhardt creates a typology of Liao pagoda styles and also explores the impact that Liao pagodas may have had on Chinese architectural history as a whole. Steinhardt cites both an octagonal ground plan and a thirteen-eaved design as being innovative features introduced by the Liao to the wider region.<sup>511</sup> While there is no support for either of these statements within the Chinese literature, Liao pagodas do play a significant role in the available histories of Chinese pagodas.<sup>512</sup>

Pagodas are a category of building that is almost always included in the histories of Chinese architecture that we have been discussing so far in this chapter. As early as 1955, Liang Sicheng had created a typology of pagoda designs within China, tying these monuments in to the wider chronological history of Chinese architecture (Fig. 2.3).<sup>513</sup> Perhaps in part due to the importance of the *Yingzao fashi* and its focus on timber construction, the Liao pagoda that has received the most attention is the Yingxian Timber Pagoda.<sup>514</sup> While its position as the

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<sup>509</sup> It is also worth noting that the Tang themselves also came from semi-nomadic stock, with Tang Gaozu noted more for his horsemanship than the arts; for a brief introduction to Gaozu's nomadic past see: Knapp, "Did the Middle Kingdom Have a Middle Period? The Problem of 'Medieval' in China's History." p.9.

<sup>510</sup> Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. Conclusion: pp.383-406.

<sup>511</sup> Steinhardt. pp.387-9.

<sup>512</sup> For an introduction to Liao pagodas in the East Asian language literature, see: 陳術石 Chen Shushi and 佟強 Tong Qiang, "An Outline of the Investigation and Research on the Chitan (960-1127) Buddhist Towers (辽塔相关调查及研究概述)," *Zhongguo Wenwu Kexue Yanjiu* 中国文物科学研究 26, no. 2 (2012): 22-25.

<sup>513</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.116.

<sup>514</sup> See: Chen Mingda, *Yingxian Timber Pagoda*.

earliest and tallest surviving timber pagoda in China makes it a significant site within Chinese architectural history, the Yingxian Pagoda's construction material makes it less practical as a point of comparison with other extant Chinese pagodas.

From the 1980s onwards, histories specifically focussed on Chinese pagodas began to appear. The most prolific figure within this field is Zhang Yuhuan who has published multiple monographs over the past three decades creating a record of pagodas in China.<sup>515</sup> The most comprehensive published survey of Chinese pagoda architecture to date can be found in Cheng Peng's *An Overview of Chinese Pagodas*.<sup>516</sup> As with the rest of the field of Chinese architectural history, surveys of Chinese pagodas tend to be organised chronologically by dynasty, leaving the Liao examples once again in a perpetual position of subordination to pagodas of the Song dynasty.<sup>517</sup> While surveys specifically of Liao pagodas have been carried out in recent years, the aim of these studies has primarily been to record and categorise these monuments rather than to readdress the Liao position in the Chinese architectural narrative as Steinhardt attempted in *Liao Architecture*.<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>515</sup> See: Zhang Yuhuan, *Famous Pagodas of China*., 张驭寰 Zhang Yuhuan, *The Cream of Chinese Pagodas* (中国古塔精粹) (Beijing: Kexue Chubanshe (科学出版社), 1988)., 张驭寰 Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas*, 中国佛塔史 (Beijing: Kexue Chubanshe (科学出版社), 2006)., 张驭寰 Zhang Yuhuan, *A Record of Ancient Pagodas*, 古塔实录 (Wuhan: Huazhong Keji Daxue Chubanshe (华中科技大学出版社), 2011).

<sup>516</sup> A full list of the pagodas surveyed can be found in: Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. pp.273-336.

<sup>517</sup> See for example Xu Huadang's discussion of the Liao/Song period in which the Liao are not mentioned once: Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*, 中国古塔造型 (Beijing: Zhongguo Linye Chubanshe (中国林业出版社), 2007). pp.39-45.

<sup>518</sup> There has been one published typology of Liao pagodas: 赵兵兵 Zhao Bingbing and 陈伯超 Chen Bochao, "The Development and Characters of Brick Masonry Towers in Liao Dynasty," *Architectural Culture* 4, no. 2 (2011): 146–51. See also the PhD thesis of Gu Yu, which surveys the relic deposits at Liao pagoda sites across Hebei, Liaoning and Inner Mongolia: 谷赞 Gu yu, "Research on Liao Pagodas (辽塔研究)" (Central Academy of Fine Arts, 中央美术学院, 2013).

## 2.2. The Historical East Asian Pagoda (HEAP) Database:

In some respects, it seems that the narrative of the Liao dynasty as a foreign ‘other’ adapting to ‘Chinese’ norms is actually reinforced by the traditional approach to Chinese architectural history. If a move away from the historical tradition into the field of architectural history does not provide a means of escaping the dominant historiographical paradigms affecting Liao dynasty study, then this suggests that a new methodology is needed to break the deadlock. As we noted in the previous chapter, the advantage of the pagoda is that it is an architectural form that appears throughout the East Asian region. This led to the concept of the Historical East Asian Pagoda (HEAP) Database: a geo-referenced record of extant pagodas not just in China but North Korea, South Korea and Japan, that would allow for pagodas to be mapped and analysed at this regional level.

The aim was to create a database that could eventually be given a public release and provide not just the data on the pagodas themselves, but also a means to compare and analyse pagodas from different places, polities and periods in a way that would be easily accessible and not require specialised software on the part of the end user. The industry standard application for GIS (Geographical Information System) analysis: ESRI’s (Environmental Systems Research Institute) ArcGIS requires a prohibitively expensive licence fee and, while open access alternatives are available, they are all equally noted for their steep learning curves for new users.<sup>519</sup> The HEAP Database has therefore been built in Microsoft Excel which, while not open access, is available to the majority of university students and

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<sup>519</sup> The pricing structure for ArcGIS can be found at: <https://www.esri.com/en-gb/store/arcgis-desktop> (accessed 21/08/17). The consensus for a steep learning curve can be seen in the introduction to almost any textbooks introducing students to GIS, for example, see: Francis. Harvey, *A Primer of GIS: Fundamental Geographic and Cartographic Concepts* (New York: The Guildford Press, 2008). Introduction.

businesses worldwide. All functions of the database have been programmed using VBA (Visual Basic for Applications) in Excel for Microsoft Office 365. As long as the file is saved as a .xlsm file and opened in a compatible version of Excel (2007 or later), the end user is granted access to the full statistical analysis and GIS functions of the database for their own research.

The precedent for geo-referenced databases of architecture within China is well established. Tackett has already used evidence from the *Database of Tang, Song, and Liao Tombs* (唐宋遼墓葬數據庫), completed in 2017, in his work on the formulation of national identity during the Northern Song.<sup>520</sup> Also in 2017, the website for the *Architectura Sinica* project was opened to public access providing a database of individual buildings constructed in eighth to thirteenth century China.<sup>521</sup> There is, however, yet to be a publicly available project of this sort to either focus on pagodas, or to transcend current national boundaries.<sup>522</sup> This means that the HEAP Database has the potential to offer a new perspective while also having the potential to be combined with research from these other databases in future.

Before the HEAP Database could be created, there needed to be an established set of criteria for which buildings would be included. Given the perceived historical importance of pagodas, a large quantity have been marked as protected sites by the governments of each of the countries in the survey region. The HEAP Database draws its information from the publicly

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<sup>520</sup> For more on Tackett's methodology and a guide to the database, see: Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation: Song China and the Forging of an East Asian World Order*. pp.291-4.

<sup>521</sup> The *Architectura Sinica* project is still in active development but can be accessed at: <https://architecturasinica.org/index.html> (accessed 27/08/18).

<sup>522</sup> While the *Architectura Sinica* database does include pagodas and will no doubt include more in future versions, the current focus for the project appears to be primarily on timber halls.

available protected cultural heritage lists at the national level in China, Japan, North Korea and South Korea.<sup>523</sup> In Japan, as well as both North and South Korea, these are referred to as lists of ‘National Treasures’ (國寶), and in China as ‘Protected Cultural Sites of National Significance’ (全國重點文物保護).<sup>524</sup> Also included are pagodas protected at the provincial level within China to compensate for the disparity in both size and population between China and the other nations included in the survey region.<sup>525</sup>

The decision to only include extant buildings was made for two primary reasons. The first is that there would be no way to systematically collect data on non-extant pagodas in a manner that would not reflect the unconscious bias of the author. There are currently no existing surveys that have aimed to create a comprehensive list of either excavated pagoda foundations or references to these buildings in the historical literature. Secondly, the aim of the HEAP database is to record the same architectural features for each of the included pagodas and this information would be impossible to ascertain for the majority of the non-extant structures. While the inclusion of only extant pagodas will inevitably have had an impact on some of the analysis and conclusions derived from studying the HEAP Database,

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<sup>523</sup> Note that these lists are updated periodically, the HEAP Database only takes account of pagodas added to these lists prior to June 2015.

<sup>524</sup> These are all also available in the form of searchable lists from the websites of the appropriate government agencies in each country, see: <http://www.bunka.go.jp/> (accessed 06/06/15), <http://heritage.go.kr/heri/idx/index.do> (accessed 06/06/15), and <http://www.sach.gov.cn/> (accessed 06/06/15).

<sup>525</sup> When taken as an average, each of the provinces of China has a size of approximately 270,000 square kilometres and a population of approximately 42 million people when compared to an average across the nations of Japan, North Korea and South Korea of approximately 200,000 square kilometres and a population of 67 million people. The provincial level protected cultural sites units are updated periodically in batches. The most recent updates to each of these lists, as of June 2015 that were used for data collection were as follows: Henan: 7<sup>th</sup> Batch (2013), Hebei: 5<sup>th</sup> Batch (2008), Beijing: 8<sup>th</sup> Batch (2011), Tianjin: 4<sup>th</sup> Batch (2013), Shanxi: 4<sup>th</sup> Batch (2004), Tibet: 6<sup>th</sup> Batch: (2013), Inner Mongolia: 5<sup>th</sup> Batch (2014), Liaoning: 9<sup>th</sup> Batch (2014), Jilin: 7<sup>th</sup> Batch (2014), Heilongjiang: 5<sup>th</sup> Batch (2005), Shanghai: 8<sup>th</sup> Batch (2014), Jiangsu: 7<sup>th</sup> Batch (2011), Xinjiang: 7<sup>th</sup> Batch (2014), Anhui: 7<sup>th</sup> Batch (2012), Fujian: 8<sup>th</sup> Batch (2013), Jiangxi: 5<sup>th</sup> Batch (2006), Shandong: 5<sup>th</sup> Batch (2015), Hubei: 6<sup>th</sup> Batch (2014), Hunan: 9<sup>th</sup> Batch (2011), Guangdong: 8<sup>th</sup> Batch (2015), Guangxi: 6<sup>th</sup> Batch (2009), Hainan: 2<sup>nd</sup> Batch (2009), Chongqing: 2<sup>nd</sup> Batch (2009).

the number of surviving examples should be sufficient to get a broad sense of regional and chronological trends in the majority of cases.

To make the completion of such a project possible, there were some restrictions applied to what would be included within the HEAP Database. Firstly, the database would only include pagodas built by polities with a start date prior to the start of the Yuan Dynasty in 1271.

While the HEAP Database does hope to provide the means to explore the potential impact of Liao designs beyond the Liao period, the number of extant pagodas from the Yuan, Ming and Qing alone would be untenable for a study of this scale. Equally, pagodas that form part of a ‘pagoda group’ or ‘pagoda forest’ have also been excluded for the same reason. The Shaolinsi pagoda forest alone has over 248 extant examples, the study of which could fill a database in and of itself.<sup>526</sup> Before any pagodas at all could be added to the database, however, there first had to be a working definition of ‘pagoda’ to decide what should be included.

### **2.2.1. What is a ‘pagoda’?**

In a 2014 paper on the current state of the field in Chinese architectural history, Fu Xinian posited that the first question any architectural historian needs to ask is: what kind of building am I studying?<sup>527</sup> This is especially important for the creation of the HEAP Database as the criteria for what buildings should be included need to be clearly defined. While it may seem

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<sup>526</sup> While pagodas beyond this date and within the classification of *talin* and *taqun* are not included in this study, it is hoped that the HEAP Database may be expanded to incorporate these at a later date.

<sup>527</sup> Fu, “Understanding Chinese Research Work on Architectural History.” p.12.

like a simple question, finding a definition for the term ‘pagoda’ may be more challenging than it first appears – especially when working in the English language.

If you were asked to imagine a pagoda, the image in your mind may well be something like the famous timber Yingxian Pagoda discussed above. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a ‘pagoda’ as: ‘a tower in eastern Asia usually with roofs curving upward at the division of each of several stories and erected as a temple or memorial’.<sup>528</sup> This definition fell in line with my own expectations for the term, and I felt that there was a general consensus that this was the accepted understanding. That is, until a friend asked me to come and look at a new ‘pagoda’ he had installed in his garden in Yorkshire, England. This structure met almost none of the requirements in the definition you have just read. Not being located in East Asia was just the start: it was not a tower, nor did it possess multiple stories or roofs. The structure certainly had no religious or memorial connotations expressed through its construction. To him, though, this was a pagoda.

In the UK at least, the term ‘pagoda’ has become representative of a huge array of different garden-based structures.<sup>529</sup> A Google image search for ‘pagoda’ in 2017 will reveal a whole category dedicated to the ‘garden pagoda’ in its many forms.<sup>530</sup> This may, in part, be due to the long association pagodas and gardens have shared in British history, dating back at least as far as 1859, with the construction of Sir William Chambers’ Great Pagoda at Kew Gardens. The disparity between what the term ‘pagoda’ potentially signified in the UK and

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<sup>528</sup> See: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pagoda> (accessed 14/12/17)

<sup>529</sup> A problem only exacerbated by its frequent conflation with the similar sounding term ‘pergola’ – another garden-based structure.

<sup>530</sup> These range from gazebos, to bandstands to pergolas. To highlight the diversity of different ‘pagodas’ on offer, I would like to mention here that other categories within the image search included the Mercedes Pagoda, a vehicle introduced in 1963 and ‘pagodas’ built within the videogame Minecraft.

the standard dictionary definition suggested that the HEAP Database would need more robust criteria for a building's inclusion beyond simply being referred to as a 'pagoda'. Without this, assessing what should (and, perhaps more importantly, what should not) be included in the database would be an arbitrary distinction based on the author's own understanding of the term.

The actual word 'pagoda' itself, clearly a loanword not native to English, has a debated etymology. There have previously been suggestions of a Chinese origin, the most convincing of which being *bajiaota* (八角塔), or eight-sided tower.<sup>531</sup> Liang Sicheng argues for this etymology, stating that it fits in well with the established chronology of pagoda construction in China, as pagodas were mostly being produced with an octagonal ground plan when European travellers first started to use the term.<sup>532</sup> Despite this, an Indian etymology - via Portuguese – is almost certainly the more probable option.<sup>533</sup> In the classic *Hobson-Jobson Dictionary*, Yule suggested that 'pagoda' - originally *pagode* in Portuguese - comes from the word *bhagavat*, meaning holy or divine, or from derivations of this word said in prayer at temples across South-Asia.<sup>534</sup>

By 1516 we have records of the term *pagode* being used in Portuguese accounts to describe Hindu temples. Within this South-Asian context though, pagoda also has two other distinct meanings: as well as being used to describe a temple, it can also designate either an idol or a

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<sup>531</sup> This idea may have started with Liang Sicheng who suggested that the etymology of the term was unclear but that this remained the most plausible explanation, see: Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.266.

<sup>532</sup> Liang Sicheng. p.266.

<sup>533</sup> As suggested by: Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*.

<sup>534</sup> Henry Yule, *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases* (London: John Murray, 1903). pp.653-4.



denomination of coinage. As Yule describes it, ‘pagoda’ is both an ‘obscure and remarkable word’.<sup>535</sup> Before even arriving into English, or being used as a classifier for East-Asian architecture, the word ‘pagoda’ already had a complex history and an extended semantic field.

The Indian connection is an apt one, as not only does the word ‘pagoda’ seem to derive from India, but the East-Asian architectural form we are attempting to record within the HEAP Database also traces its heritage back to the Indian subcontinent.<sup>536</sup> Liang Sicheng once described the pagoda as ‘the happy combination of two principle components: the indigenous (Chinese), represented by the ‘multi-storied tower’ and the Indian stupa’.<sup>537</sup> It remains a consensus among historians of East-Asian architecture that the pagoda is an East Asian adaptation of the earlier Indian stupa and was built to mark the burial site of Buddhist relics.<sup>538</sup> This is reflected in the fact that ‘stupa’ and ‘pagoda’ are often used as synonyms in the English language, especially when observing these structures from a wider Buddhist context. For example, Snodgrass’ *The Symbolism of the Stupa*, uses the term ‘stupa’ to refer to all architecture used to mark the site of Buddhist relics, regardless of their geographic context.<sup>539</sup>

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<sup>535</sup> Yule. p.653.

<sup>536</sup> Although there is no evidence to suggest a connection between these two transitions as they happened in very different periods.

<sup>537</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.259. For the stupa in its original Indian context, refer to: Jason Hawkes and Akira Shimada, eds., *Buddhist Stūpas in South Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). and Anna Libera Dallapiccola and Stephanie Zingel-Avé, eds., *The Stūpa: Its Religious Historical and Architectural Significance* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 1980).

<sup>538</sup> For example see the description of a pagoda in any of the general literature on *ta* in China, such as: Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. p.2. or Zhang Yuhuan, *A Record of Ancient Pagodas*. p.4.

<sup>539</sup> Adrian Snodgrass, *The Symbolism of the Stupa* (Ithaca: SEAP, 1985).

Although Liang Sicheng has remarked that this definition of the term ‘pagoda’ as an East Asian variant of the ‘stupa’ is accepted across the majority of European languages, ‘pagoda’ still has a semantic range that covers significantly more than just this specific East-Asian architectural form.<sup>540</sup> As well as the huge quantity of garden architecture it can refer to in the UK, the word has taken on different meanings in different cultural contexts. A ‘pagoda’ in Vietnam and Cambodia, for example, can refer to not just Buddhist towers (although it often does) but also to whole temples and even temple complexes.<sup>541</sup> In India, as well, the term pagoda is still used to refer to Buddhist structures that, were they found in an East-Asian context, we might refer to as ‘stupas’.<sup>542</sup> A famous recent example of this can be found in the case of the Global Vipassana Pagoda, the largest hollow stone monument in the world, that was opened in 2009 near Mumbai. Finally, even in Birmingham, the city where this study is being completed, we have a granite structure referred to as a ‘pagoda’ marking the not-particularly auspicious location of Holloway Circus Roundabout.<sup>543</sup>

### 2.2.2. What is a *ta* (塔) ?

If ‘pagoda’ in English proves too difficult a term to pin down, then perhaps it would be best to return to the East-Asian character that it is most frequently translated from – *ta* (塔).<sup>544</sup> In

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<sup>540</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.266.

<sup>541</sup> See for example, the Trần Quốc Pagoda, recognised as the oldest Buddhist temple in Hanoi. This disparity in definition may be a result of the extended translation process through French into English.

<sup>542</sup> That is to say, that they are more likely to be defined as *futu* (浮圖) or *sudubo* (窣堵波) than *ta* (塔) in Chinese literature.

<sup>543</sup> This ‘pagoda’ was donated to the city by a local Chinese supermarket in 1998 as part of a *Fengshui* garden in the centre of the roundabout.

<sup>544</sup> Also pronounced *tō* in Japanese and *tab* in Korean.

order to understand this character, it is important to first look at its etymology as well as the history and semantic range of the objects it describes.

Prior to the coining of the term *ta*, there had already been Buddhist towers in China based on the concept of the Indian stupa.<sup>545</sup> The characters originally used to describe these buildings: *futu* (浮屠) and *sudubo* (窣堵波) are believed to be transliterations of the original Sanskrit term *stūpa*.<sup>546</sup> The earliest recorded example of a *futu* is that built at Baima Temple in Henan Province, which is recorded in the *Weishu* as having been constructed in 68 under the orders of Ming Xianzong of the Han dynasty.<sup>547</sup> Miller points to evidence from the seventh century text the *Xiyuji* (西域記) written by the monk Xuanzang, that during the Tang, the terms *futu* and *sudubo* had become synonymous with another term: *tapo* (塔婆). *Tapo* may have represented another transliteration, either from the Prakrit *thūpo*, or the Pali *thūpa*, with *ta* being an abbreviation of this term.<sup>548</sup>

Although both simplified and traditional Chinese currently render the character *ta* in the same way, there is also a classical variant (塿), which is first recorded as having appeared in Ge Hong's fourth century dictionary, the *Yaoyong ziyuan* (要用字苑). The left radical of the character: *tu* (土) represents earth (and potentially burial), with the right radical: *da* (畐)

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<sup>545</sup> Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.6.

<sup>546</sup> Tracy Miller, "Of Palaces and Pagodas: Palatial Symbolism in the Buddhist Architecture of Early Medieval China," *Frontier Histories of China* 10, no. 2 (2015): 222–63. pp.235-6.

<sup>547</sup> 丁援 Ding Yuan, *Chinese Architecture*, 中国建筑 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju (中华书局), 2012). p.128. This structure has since been destroyed, the current structure at the site dates to the Jin, see: Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. p.13.

<sup>548</sup> Miller, "Of Palaces and Pagodas: Palatial Symbolism in the Buddhist Architecture of Early Medieval China." p.236.

providing the phonetic part of the compound linking it to the original Prakrit or Pali terminology.<sup>549</sup> The fact that this character first appears to describe Buddhist relic sites has led Zhang Yuhuan to conclude that this character was a neologism specifically created to represent the Chinese conception of the stupa.<sup>550</sup> This could help to explain why the term *tapo* became abbreviated to *ta* over time, as the single character was enough to convey the intended meaning.

Guo Qinghua suggests that the essential structure of a *ta* had existed in the Chinese vernacular prior to its conversion as a religious monument. Tall timber buildings in various forms, from high-platform pavilions to fortified homesteads and watchtowers, had been constructed from as early as the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770-476BCE) in what is now China. Multi-eaved structures, more reminiscent of the style of buildings we have come to classify as *ta* or pagodas, appeared from the early Han (206BCE-220CE).<sup>551</sup> Although none of these original Han towers remain extant, there are models, that reproduce the design in miniature, that survive from the period which demonstrate that the structural awareness was there to create such architecture.<sup>552</sup>

According to Guo Qinghua, the only visual difference between these original Han towers and early pagodas, was that the traditional Chinese phoenix atop the roof was replaced by the

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<sup>549</sup> 姚兰 Yao Lan, *Famous Pagodas of China* (中国名塔) (Hefei: Shidai Chubanshi 时代出版社, 2012). p.6.

<sup>550</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *A Record of Ancient Pagodas*. p.7.

<sup>551</sup> Qinghua Guo, "From Tower to Pagoda: Structural and Technological Transition," *Construction History* 20 (2004): 3–19. p.18.

<sup>552</sup> See, for example the miniature towers featured in: Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*. p.89. Miniature *ta*, or pagodas were later produced under the Eastern Jin, see: Eugene Wang, "What Do Trigrams Have to Do with Buddhas? The Northern Liang Stupas as a Hybrid Spatial Model," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 35 (1999): 70–91.

metal finial of the stupa.<sup>553</sup> It may even be the case that the first pagodas could have been created by adding a Buddhist finial to pre-existing Chinese structures.<sup>554</sup> Despite this, it is worth noting that these ideas of the stupa taking on a distinct ‘Chinese’ form, completely independent from their Indian origins, may be a reflection of the ‘sinification’ narrative being applied to this architectural form.<sup>555</sup> Miller has pointed to the towering temples found in India as an area of potential influence in the design of *ta* that has, thus far, only received limited exploration in the Chinese literature.<sup>556</sup>

Moving into the period from the third to the fifth centuries, despite there still being a lack of extant examples, evidence for the construction of *ta* in China increases dramatically. Earthen mounds from third century Xinjiang, built in the vein of Indian stupa mounds, present a possible precursor to what we would now consider *ta*.<sup>557</sup> In Gansu, many miniature *ta* have been found dating to the Liang kingdoms of the fifth century that demonstrate a definitive structural change from the stupa designs witnessed in both India and Xinjiang.<sup>558</sup> It is under the contemporaneous Northern Wei (386-535), however, that the picture really begins to come together with both material and written confirmation of *ta* construction, as well as the earliest surviving extant example of a building referred to as a *ta*.

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<sup>553</sup> Guo, “From Tower to Pagoda: Structural and Technological Transition.” p.4.

<sup>554</sup> As suggested in: 樓慶西 Lou Qingxi, *Twenty Essays on Chinese Architecture (中國古建築: 二十講)* (Hong Kong: Open Page Publishing, 2014). p.125.

<sup>555</sup> Standen, *Demystifying China*. p.37. The original argument made by Liang Sicheng for the ‘sinification’ of Buddhist architecture can be found in translation in: Liang Sicheng, “Why Study Chinese Architecture?” p.10.

<sup>556</sup> Miller, “Of Palaces and Pagodas: Palatial Symbolism in the Buddhist Architecture of Early Medieval China.” pp.237. See also: Miller, “Perfecting the Mountain: On the Morphology of Towering Temples in East Asia.” p.436.

<sup>557</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *Chinese Buddhist Architecture*. p.19. For examples of some of these structures, such as those at Endere and Miran, see: Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*. pp.98-101.

<sup>558</sup> Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*. pp.175-177., also: Wang, “What Do Trigrams Have to Do with Buddhas? The Northern Liang Stupas as a Hybrid Spatial Model.” p.70-1.

The Buddhist cave sites of Longmen and Yungang contain depictions of what *ta* may have looked like in the fifth century. These carvings show square based buildings with between five and nine eaves, as well as decorated exteriors featuring images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas.<sup>559</sup> The sixth century brought us the *Luoyang qielan ji*, a record of the Buddhist temple sites that existed around Luoyang in this period written by Yang Xuanzhi. The text extends to five volumes and provides information about the origins, structures and organisation systems of Luoyang's temples, including their *ta*.<sup>560</sup> The sixth century is also when we finally have our first extant building that is referred to by the character *ta*, built towards the end of the Northern Wei dynasty, in 523, at Songyue Temple. In the seventh century, in the Sui and then the Tang dynasty, *ta* became ever more prevalent with many more surviving examples dateable to this period. By this stage, the character '*ta*' had already progressed into the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago, with the first surviving examples of *ta* in both of these regions dating to the first decade of the seventh century.<sup>561</sup>

As time progressed, so too did the number of *ta* produced, as well as the variety of styles they were produced in. Unfortunately, the semantic range of the character has also grown significantly since the character was first coined. One of the most famous pagodas included in the HEAP Database, the *tieta* (铁塔) or 'Iron Pagoda' - built under the Northern Song dynasty in Kaifeng in 1049 - provides a pertinent example of this. Searching for images of

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<sup>559</sup> It was first pointed out by Liang Sicheng that these cave sites could provide knowledge of early *ta*: Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.259. A more detailed analysis of the position of these images in early *ta* development can be found in Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*. pp.168-171. and Miller, "Of Palaces and Pagodas: Palatial Symbolism in the Buddhist Architecture of Early Medieval China." p.231

<sup>560</sup> The full text is available in English translation: Wang Yi-t'ung, *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Lo-Yang* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). There is also a useful summary table of the temples and their features in Zhang Yuhuan, *Chinese Buddhist Architecture*. pp.21-22

<sup>561</sup> For more on the transition of pagodas from China to Korea and Japan see: Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*. Chapter 8. pp.285-344.

this pagoda online using its Chinese name yields some surprising results. The first pages on any given search engine lead not to the Iron Pagoda of Kaifeng - but to the Eiffel Tower in Paris.<sup>562</sup>

Google's online translation analytics show that currently, not only is 'pagoda' not alone as an English translation for the character *ta*, but it is not even the most common. Today, *ta* is most frequently translated as 'tower', then 'column', with 'pagoda' coming in a distant third place.<sup>563</sup> Therefore, *tieta*, or 'iron pagoda', could just as equally be translated as 'iron tower', and there is arguably no more famous iron tower than a certain Parisian landmark. A recent Chinese textbook on pagodas suggests that when most Chinese speakers think of the character *ta*, they are just as likely to think of the Eiffel Tower or the Pyramids of Giza as they are to think about anything constructed in China.<sup>564</sup>

But how did this change in the associated meaning of the term *ta* come about? As a general rule, Chinese architecture is expanded on the horizontal, rather than the vertical plane, with pagodas being a notable exception to this.<sup>565</sup> In the majority of East-Asian historical cityscapes, a pagoda would probably have been the tallest building. As a result, since at least as early as the Ming dynasty, the character *ta* had come not just to represent Buddhist towers, but also tall buildings and towers more generally. Cheng Peng states that from the Ming onwards, *ta* could be built for a variety of purposes not associated with Buddhism. These

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<sup>562</sup> Tested using Google, Bing and Yahoo search (accessed 14/07/17).

<sup>563</sup> These results come courtesy of Google Translate's analytics and are accurate as of July 2017 but could be subject to change as the corpus used by Google Translate is always growing.

<sup>564</sup> 张毅捷 Zhang Yijie, *Pagodas*, 说塔 (Shanghai: Tongji Daxue Chubanshe 同济大学出版社, 2012). pp.1-3.

<sup>565</sup> Steinhardt, "Chinese Architectural History in the Twenty-First Century." p.40.

range from scenic and military observation platforms to lighthouses and non-Buddhist tombs.<sup>566</sup> From the Qing, some Daoist monks even had their burial sites marked by a *ta*, with the first examples appearing in Qianshan, Liaoning province in 1667.<sup>567</sup>

One example of how this transition occurred can be seen in the case of ‘wenfeng pagodas’ (*wenfeng ta*, 文風塔). These pagodas were built for students to pray for and celebrate their success in the imperial examinations from the Ming dynasty onwards with famous examples in Hangzhou, Longxi and Fuyang.<sup>568</sup> This tradition likely finds its origin at the Dayan Pagoda (652) in Tang Changan (today's Xi'an), where students are said to have carved their names into the building after successfully passing the imperial examination. The Dayan Pagoda, however, was built as the centrepiece of a Buddhist temple with the students' celebratory statements an unintended later function of the building. It was only in the Ming that specific ‘wenfeng pagodas’ were created with this as their primary purpose.

### **2.2.3. Pagoda as a translation of *ta*:**

It has become clear that the term ‘pagoda’ in English and ‘*ta*’ in Chinese have a very different semantic range. Although they can both describe the East-Asian Buddhist tower that we witnessed in the dictionary description at the beginning of this section, they could also both cover a whole range of other buildings. A ‘pagoda’ can be anything from a Vietnamese temple complex, to an Indian coin, to a gazebo in a British country garden. A ‘*ta*’, on the

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<sup>566</sup> Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.5.

<sup>567</sup> Zhang Yijie, *Pagodas*. p.116.

<sup>568</sup> Yao Lan, *Famous Pagodas of China* (中国名塔). p.35.



other hand, could be none of these things, but could be used to describe the Eiffel Tower or a Grecian column – both of which, in turn, could not accurately be described as a ‘pagoda’. If we were to draw a Venn diagram of all the buildings covered by the term ‘pagoda’, and all those covered by the term ‘*ta*’, we would likely only find a limited area of commonality.

For the creation of the HEAP Database, this presents a real challenge as to what structures should be included. The stated aim of including extant ‘pagodas’ across East-Asia, becomes an issue when we consider all of the different architecture that can fall under the umbrella term of ‘pagoda’. A database that included all of the extant garden architecture, temples and temple complexes across East-Asia would not be a plausible objective. Equally, the lighthouses, watchtowers and other secular buildings covered by the term *ta* today would not be relevant to this study of Liao Buddhist architecture in its regional context. If, however, we accept that the pre-Ming definition of the term *ta* covered only Buddhist towers, rather than towers more generally, then being classified as a *ta* becomes much more tenable as a requirement for inclusion within the HEAP Database (note that, when the term ‘pagoda’ is used within this study, it is to this original pre-Ming definition of *ta* that it will refer). Given that the HEAP Database only aims to include pagodas built by polities that started prior to the Yuan Dynasty in 1271, all buildings that are referred to by this term within the protected sites lists of the survey region will be included.

Having a working definition for ‘pagoda’ is only half the battle. Within this definition, there are still a great many different pagoda types that have been categorised over the years by various architectural historians since Liang Sicheng first published a typology of ‘pagodas’ in

1955.<sup>569</sup> In the following section, the general literature on pagodas will be explored: firstly to explore common components that all pagodas shared, and then to identify the accepted categories into which pagodas have previously been divided.<sup>570</sup>

#### 2.2.4. Key elements of the pagoda:

Pagodas are considered to consist of four main structural components: the *digong* (地宫), *taji* (塔基), *tashen* (塔身) and *tasha* (塔刹).<sup>571</sup> The *digong*, also known as the *shelixue* (舍利穴) is sometimes literally translated into English as the ‘underground palace’ but can be referred to more unambiguously as a ‘relic chamber’ or ‘relic room’. The *digong* normally takes the form of a closed chamber underground, beneath the base of the building itself. The *digong* was originally conceived to hold *sarira* relics, like the first Indian stupas, but given the rarity of these objects, the contents of *digong* diversified over time to include Buddhist sutras, likenesses of the Buddha and other valuable treasures.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> Liang Sicheng’s original typology of pagodas can be found in: Liang Sicheng, *History of Chinese Architecture* (中國建築史). English translation is also available in: Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. pp.259-279. The most comprehensive categorisation of Chinese pagodas currently available can be found in Zhang Yuhuan, *A Record of Ancient Pagodas*. pp.81-121.

<sup>570</sup> By ‘general literature’ here, I refer to texts that have attempted to take a wider approach to pagodas in China rather than those looking at specific examples or periods. These include both academic works as well as more general textbooks, see: Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas.*, Zhang Yuhuan, *A Record of Ancient Pagodas.*, Yao Lan, *Famous Pagodas of China* (中國名塔), Zhang Yijie, *Pagodas.*, Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. And Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*.

<sup>571</sup> These division were first made by Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.259. but have been generally accepted and carried through to more recent general works on Chinese pagodas such as Zhang Yuhuan, *A Record of Ancient Pagodas*. Chapter 8. pp.185-220. and Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. Chapter 1.2. pp.14-32.

<sup>572</sup> Yao Lan, *Famous Pagodas of China* (中國名塔). p.17.

Above the *digong*, the first level of the pagoda's structure is known as the *taji*, or 'pagoda base'. While Indian stupa bases are quite short relative to the rest of the structure, the bases of pagodas in China grew in both height and elaboration over time.<sup>573</sup> *Taji* often feature relief carving, such as having the top layer of the base shaped like the petals of a lotus flower in a design called *yinglian* (仰莲). The *taji* can also be further divided into two sections, the *tatai* (塔台) or 'pagoda platform' at the bottom and the *tazuo* (塔座) or 'pagoda seat' above.<sup>574</sup>

The majority of pagodas in China follow a square, hexagonal or octagonal ground-plan but there are also some round examples and even one surviving dodecagonal pagoda.<sup>575</sup>

Sat atop the *taji* is the *tashen* (塔身) or 'body' of the pagoda. This represents the main part of the structure and its form is often the easiest way to distinguish between pagoda types. The exterior of the *tashen* of most pagodas is divided up by a series of eaves. The number of eaves vary but, in the overwhelming majority of cases, it is an odd number.<sup>576</sup> The exterior of the pagoda body may be decorated in relief carving of Buddhist images and also (in the case of brick pagodas) faux representations of timber architectural elements such as *zhiling chuang* (直棂窗 – latticed/mullion windows) and *dougong* (斗拱 – wooden brackets).<sup>577</sup> The interior of the *tashen* varies depending on the pagoda type. Some pagodas are completely

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<sup>573</sup> Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. p.12.

<sup>574</sup> 王其钧 Wang Qijun, *Visual Dictionary of Chinese Architecture*, 中国建筑图解词典 (Beijing: China Machine Press, 2006). p.205.

<sup>575</sup> This is the *Songyuesi* Pagoda and according to Steinhardt it is the only recorded dodecagonal building recorded in historical Chinese architecture: Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*. p.202.

<sup>576</sup> Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. p.25.

<sup>577</sup> 王绍周 Wang Shaozhou, ed., *Chinese Vernacular Architecture Vol.3*, 中国民族建筑 第三卷 (Nanjing: Jiangsu Kexue Jishu Chubanshe (江苏科学技术出版社), 1999). p.56.

filled-in with no interior space, some have interior space at ground level, and some will have a multi-storey interior space.<sup>578</sup>

Finally, the very top of a pagoda is crowned with a *tasha* (塔刹), normally referred to in English as the ‘finial’ of the building. It is the *tasha* that indicates the purpose of the pagoda as a Buddhist religious building.<sup>579</sup> The finial of a pagoda can also be seen as a representation of the whole structure again in miniature with its own *digong*, *taji*, *tashen* and *tasha*.<sup>580</sup> Originally *tasha* were designed to appear like Indian stupas but over time some came to appear more like a pagoda instead.<sup>581</sup>

#### 2.2.5. Common types of *ta*/pagoda:

There is such variety among pagodas in China that Lou Qingxi has suggested it is almost worth just considering them all to be unique rather than creating any kind of typology.<sup>582</sup> This has not prevented people from trying however. Liang Sicheng was the first to attempt a categorisation of pagoda types, eventually settling on five different main groups:

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<sup>578</sup> Yao Lan, *Famous Pagodas of China* (中国名塔). p.19.

<sup>579</sup> Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. p.14.

<sup>580</sup> Yao Lan, *Famous Pagodas of China* (中国名塔). p.22. The miniature version of the *digong* that forms part of the *tasha* is known as a *tiangong* (天宫) or ‘heavenly palace’ and can also be used to store relics or other religious artefacts, see: Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. p.18.

<sup>581</sup> These pagoda-style *tasha* normally take the appearance of either *louge* or *miyan* style pagodas both of which will be explained later in this chapter. For more on the different styles of *tahsa* refer to: Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. pp.14-24.

<sup>582</sup> Lou Qingxi, *Twenty Essays on Chinese Architecture* (中國古建築: 二十講). p.140.

1. *Danceng* (單層) or ‘one-storied’ pagodas.
2. *Duoceng* (多層) or ‘multi-storied’ pagodas.
3. *Miyan* (密檐) or ‘multi-eaved’ pagodas.
4. *Sudubo* (窣堵波) or ‘stupas’
5. *Jingang baozuo* (金剛寶座) or ‘five-pagoda clusters’.<sup>583</sup>

Although some changes have been made and some new categories added, the field of Chinese architectural history has largely stuck with these definitions since Liang first recorded them in the 1940s. Below are the pagoda types that appear most frequently in current studies of Chinese pagoda architecture (figures have been provided for the relevant pagoda styles for the Liao period).<sup>584</sup>

#### ***Louge* (樓閣) (Fig. 2.4):**

Translated literally by Steinhardt as ‘tower-pavilion’ this type of pagoda is often simply translated as a ‘tower-style’ pagoda.<sup>585</sup> *Louge* are thought to be the earliest form of pagoda found in China.<sup>586</sup> Although there are extant *miyan* and *tingge* pagodas that pre-date the earliest surviving *louge* pagodas, it is believed that many early pagodas, including the first

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<sup>583</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.259. Note that all of the above translations from Chinese to English are also Liang Sicheng’s.

<sup>584</sup> The most comprehensive typology of Chinese pagoda types can be found in Zhang Yuhuan, *A Record of Ancient Pagodas*. Chapter 3. There are various pagoda types in Zhang Yuhuan’s list that have not featured in the rest of the recent Chinese pagoda literature, these are: *daifu jie* pagodas (帶副階塔), *neibu louge waibu miyan* pagodas (內部樓閣外部密檐塔), *zaoxiang* pagodas (造像塔), *yixing* pagodas (異型塔), *wulun* pagoda (五輪塔), *falun* pagodas (法輪塔), *duobao* pagodas (多寶塔).

<sup>585</sup> Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*. p.205.

<sup>586</sup> Zhang Yijie, *Pagodas*. p.35.

recorded example at *Baima Temple*, were built in the *louge* style.<sup>587</sup> *Louge* pagoda became popular in the Northern and Southern dynasties period and the Tang but the largest number of surviving examples date from the Song-Liao-Jin era.<sup>588</sup> It is generally agreed that *louge* pagodas were the most commonly produced pagoda style in China.<sup>589</sup>

The distinguishing feature of the *louge* pagoda is that it can act as a tower, having multiple interior storeys.<sup>590</sup> The number of eaves on the outside of the building is normally in direct correlation with the number of interior storeys. From the Tang onwards, however, we begin to see pagodas with a *louge* style exterior - giving the appearance of a tower - but without actually having any interior space.<sup>591</sup> There are *louge* pagodas with square, hexagonal and octagonal ground-plans and they commonly have between five and nine eaves.<sup>592</sup> There are surviving *louge* pagodas constructed in both timber and brick as well as some examples that make use of both materials, utilising a brick body with external wooden cladding.<sup>593</sup> Initially, *louge* pagodas would have been exclusively built of wood but susceptibility to lightning and fire is believed to have led to a gradual shift towards brick construction.<sup>594</sup>

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<sup>587</sup> Yao Lan, *Famous Pagodas of China* (中国名塔). p.5.

<sup>588</sup> Ding Yuan, *Chinese Archit.* p.137.

<sup>589</sup> Wang Qijun, *Visual Dictionary of Chinese Architecture*. p.202. and Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*. p.205.

<sup>590</sup> Zhang Yijie, *Pagodas*. p.35.

<sup>591</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *Famous Pagodas of China*. p.3.

<sup>592</sup> Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.8.

<sup>593</sup> Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.220. This two material construction is limited mainly to those constructed south of the Yangtze River, see: Xiao Mo, *History of Chinese Architecture*. p.178.

<sup>594</sup> Yao Lan, *Famous Pagodas of China* (中国名塔). p.10.

**Miyan (密檐) (Fig. 2.5):**

*Miyan* is normally translated as a ‘dense-eaved’ pagoda style. Along with *louge*, *miyan* pagodas are one of the two most common pagoda types found in China.<sup>595</sup> Unlike the *louge* style, *miyan* pagodas generally have a ‘solid core’, offering no interior space.<sup>596</sup> This means that there is often no way to climb or scale a *miyan* pagoda.<sup>597</sup> The name ‘*miyan*’ derives from the short distance between each of the pagodas eaves relative to the overall height. *Miyan* pagodas generally have an extended base and body before you reach the first eave, forcing the rest of the eaves to be closely packed together.<sup>598</sup> Both the base and body of *miyan* pagodas are also frequently decorated with Buddhist imagery.<sup>599</sup>

*Miyan* pagodas are almost exclusively built out of brick but frequently imitate timber architectural features such as *dougong* brackets in brickwork.<sup>600</sup> The earliest extant brick building in China is a pagoda built in the *miyan* style: the Songyuesi Pagoda, built in 523. *Miyan* pagodas grew in popularity in the Tang and became the most common form of pagoda architecture constructed by the Liao.<sup>601</sup> There are *miyan* pagodas with square, hexagonal and octagonal ground plans, but Cheng Peng notes that they most frequently have eight sides and thirteen eaves.<sup>602</sup>

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<sup>595</sup> Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.8.

<sup>596</sup> Guo Daiheng, “The Liao, Song, Xi Xia, and Jin Dynasties.” p.179. At least above ground, the majority still feature a *digong*: Yao Lan, *Famous Pagodas of China (中国名塔)*. p.25. There are some *miyan* pagodas that do have interior space but most still classify them as *miyan* if they meet the expectations of the exterior appearance – Zhang Yuhuan though, has created a separate category for these monuments: Zhang Yuhuan, *A Record of Ancient Pagodas*. p.103.

<sup>597</sup> Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.220.

<sup>598</sup> Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.8.

<sup>599</sup> Zhang Yijie, *Pagodas*. p.45.

<sup>600</sup> Zhang Yijie. p.45. Although it has been noted that this is far less common on early examples: Wang Qijun, *Visual Dictionary of Chinese Architecture*. p.203.

<sup>601</sup> Wang Qijun, *Visual Dictionary of Chinese Architecture*. p.203.

<sup>602</sup> Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.8.

***Lama* (喇嘛) (Fig. 2.6):**

Named after the lamas of Tibet, *lama* pagodas are found mainly in Tibet and Inner Mongolia having arrived into what is now China from Nepal around the eighth century.<sup>603</sup> Buddhism is believed to have gained traction in Tibet in the seventh century, combining with pre-existing Bon traditions and receiving royal patronage from the eighth century onwards.<sup>604</sup> The influence of lamas such as Phagpa at the Yuan court led to the widespread adoption of this form during the Yuan dynasty but the style fell out of favour again under the Ming.<sup>605</sup>

*Lama* pagodas are far closer in appearance to the traditional stupas of India and Central Asia than other pagoda styles.<sup>606</sup> Other names for *lama* pagodas in Chinese reference their unique shape, being referred to as ‘bottle shaped’ (*pingxing* (瓶形) pagodas, ‘upturned-bowl’ *fubo* (覆钵) pagodas, and even ‘raspberry style’ (*fupenshi* 覆盆式) pagodas.<sup>607</sup> Due to their shape, it can be difficult to separate *lama* pagodas into their discrete sections of base, body and finial. The top of a *lama* pagoda is traditionally crowned with a set of discs referred to as *xianglun* (相轮) often numbering thirteen in total.<sup>608</sup> They were normally created as a funerary monument for a lama or other monks rather than as a traditional reliquary.<sup>609</sup>

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<sup>603</sup> Cheng Peng, p.9.

<sup>604</sup> Christopher Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese during the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). p.43.

<sup>605</sup> Ding Yuan, *Chinese Archit.* p.143.

<sup>606</sup> Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. p.17. Zhang Yijie, *Pagodas*. p.56.

<sup>607</sup> Examples of each of these usages can be found respectively in: Zhang Yuhuan, *Famous Pagodas of China*. p.11., Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.9. and Lou Qingxi, *Twenty Essays on Chinese Architecture* (中國古建築: 二十講). p.125.

<sup>608</sup> Wang Qijun, *Visual Dictionary of Chinese Architecture*. p.204.

<sup>609</sup> Ding Yuan, *Chinese Archit.* p.143.



### ***Jingang baozuo* (金剛寶座):**

*Jingang baozuo* can be translated directly into English as ‘diamond throne’, but can equally be referred to by its original Sanskrit title – *Vajrāsana*.<sup>610</sup> Named after the original Diamond Throne, thought to have been built by King Ashoka at the spot where the Buddha reached enlightenment, this pagoda style travelled to China directly from India during the Ming.<sup>611</sup>

*Jingang baozuo* pagodas are created by erecting five small pagodas on top of a high platform, hence Liang Sicheng’s original translation as a ‘five pagoda cluster’. The five pagodas represent the five founding relics of the ‘Diamond World’ or *Vajrādhatu*.<sup>612</sup> The central of the five pagodas should be larger than the other four which will be situated at each of its corners.<sup>613</sup> Depending on the period and place of construction, the five small pagodas appear in a variety of forms, replicating *louge*, *miyan* and *lama* styles.<sup>614</sup>

### ***Hua* (花/華) (Fig. 2.7):**

There are two interpretations for the name of *hua* pagodas: one is that the top level of these pagodas represents the shape of a flower and the other is that *hua* refers to the high level of decoration on the exterior of this style of pagoda.<sup>615</sup> Either way, *hua* pagodas are both highly

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<sup>610</sup> See the entry for Vajrasana in: Robert E Buswell and Donald Lopez, eds., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). p.493.

<sup>611</sup> Ding Yuan, *Chinese Archit.* p.145. There have been suggestions that the *Guanghui* built by the Tang and later modified by the Jin is an early example of a *jingang baozuo* pagoda but pre-restoration images demonstrate that it was a *hua* pagoda, see: Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.50.

<sup>612</sup> Lou Qingxi, *Twenty Essays on Chinese Architecture* (中國古建築: 二十講). p.132.

<sup>613</sup> Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.9.

<sup>614</sup> Zhang Yijie, *Pagodas*. p.62.

<sup>615</sup> For the ‘flower’ interpretations see: Wang Qijun, *Visual Dictionary of Chinese Architecture*. p.204. For the ‘decoration’ interpretation see: Qinghua Guo, *A Visual Dictionary of Chinese Architecture* (Mulgrave: Images, 2002). p.43. The nature of the character(s) used to represent this form allow for both explanations.

decorated in relief sculpture and do feature a large flower shaped finial so both interpretations are valid. Both the base and body of *hua* pagodas are based on either *louge* or *miyan* designs, leaving the exterior decorations and finial as the main distinguishing features of the type.<sup>616</sup> There does not seem to be a consensus as to when the *hua* style first appears, with conflicting suggestions that the design first appears in the Tang, Song and the Liao.<sup>617</sup> A Tang date would be the case only if one chooses to accept that the decorative elements of the Guanghuiji Hua Pagoda date back to its original Tang construction rather than the major restoration that took place in the Jin (or later recorded restorations by the Ming and Qing).<sup>618</sup> This could, therefore, be an interesting case study to explore with regard to the importance of the Liao in East Asian pagoda design.

### ***Tingge* (亭阁):**

*Tingge*, or ‘pavilion-style’ pagodas are one of the earliest forms of pagodas in China with the oldest surviving example dating back to 544CE.<sup>619</sup> *Tingge* pagodas generally follow either a square or round ground plan.<sup>620</sup> Also known as *danceng* (单层) or ‘single-storey’ style, these pagodas are unsurprisingly distinguished from *louge* pagodas by the fact that they are just one storey tall.<sup>621</sup> Like *louge* pagodas, *tingge* pagodas can be seen as an early attempt at trying to convert the Indian stupa into a pre-existing East Asian architectural vernacular, but it is the *louge* design that proved more popular over time.<sup>622</sup>

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<sup>616</sup> Xiao Mo, *History of Chinese Architecture*. p.183.

<sup>617</sup> For more on the Guanghuiji Pagoda, see: Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.9.

<sup>618</sup> Cheng Peng. p.50

<sup>619</sup> Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*. p.209.

<sup>620</sup> Zhang Yijie, *Pagodas*. p.50

<sup>621</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.259.

<sup>622</sup> Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.9.

***Baoqie* (宝篋) (Fig. 2.8):**

*Baoqie* pagodas can be translated directly into English as ‘precious box’ pagodas or back into their original Sanskrit as *ratna-pitaka*.<sup>623</sup> While still a Buddhist reliquary, the majority of *baoqie* pagodas live up to their name and are more akin to an actual box than a building. *Baoqie* pagodas are small, and highly decorated in a style believed to have been influenced by Gandharan art from South Asia.<sup>624</sup> *Baoqie* pagodas were produced in large numbers under the Wuyue during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period. Qian Hongchu, the final King of Wuyue, reportedly aiming to emulate King Ashoka of the Maurya Empire, produced 8,400 of these small monuments.<sup>625</sup> Although the style did not prove popular in what is now China after this point, there are surviving examples of *baoqie* pagodas from both Korea and Japan well into the second millennium CE.<sup>626</sup>

***Chuang* (幢) (Fig. 2.9):**

The *chuang* style pagoda, also called a *jing* (经) style pagoda is very similar to another architectural category separate from pagodas – the *jingchuang* (经幢). Otherwise known as the dharani or sutra pillar/column, *Jingchuang* originated in the Tang in the seventh century and consist primarily of an octagonal pillar or column. This pillar is normally mounted on a base, with a finial at the top, and inscribed with Buddhist sutras.<sup>627</sup> As Liang Sicheng so

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<sup>623</sup> Buswell and Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*. p.576.

<sup>624</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *A Record of Ancient Pagodas*. p.112.

<sup>625</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas*. Ashoka is reported to have built 84,000 pagodas during his reign in his quest to spread Buddhism, see: John Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka: A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989). p.17.

<sup>626</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *Chinese Buddhist Architecture*. p.29.

<sup>627</sup> Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.233.

elegantly puts it in his English language work, the difference between a *jingchuang* and a *chuang* pagoda is, the ‘architecturesqueness’ of the design. A *chuang* style pagoda, unlike a *jingchuang*, will mimic the architecture of either a *miyan* or *louge* pagoda in miniature.<sup>628</sup> Zhang Yuhuan adds the further qualification in his own work that, in order to be classed as a *chuang* pagoda, the structure should not have sutras engraved into its main column as a dharani pillar would.<sup>629</sup>

### ***Guojie* (过街):**

Literally translated as a ‘crossing the street’ pagoda, *guojie* pagodas are built on top of a large platform through which will run a street or thoroughfare. The design originates from the Lamaist traditions of Tibet and, like *lama* pagodas, spread to other areas of China during the Yuan.<sup>630</sup> As such, the pagoda atop the platform will usually take the form of a *lama* pagoda. *Guojie* pagodas continued to be constructed through the Ming and into the Qing.<sup>631</sup>

### ***Dai* (傣):**

*Dai* pagodas only appear in the southern provinces of what is now China, arriving in Yunnan courtesy of the Dai people of the region, a group that exists across current national boundaries in Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and Myanmar, as well as China.<sup>632</sup> *Dai* pagodas are also known as ‘Myanmar’ (*mian* 緬) pagodas as a reflection of the associations that the

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<sup>628</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.272.

<sup>629</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *A Record of Ancient Pagodas*. p.93.

<sup>630</sup> Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.9.

<sup>631</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *A Record of Ancient Pagodas*. p.89-90.

<sup>632</sup> Lou Qingxi, *Twenty Essays on Chinese Architecture* (中國古建築: 二十講). p.133.

design has with this region.<sup>633</sup> With a design based on the Indian stupa, *Dai* pagodas look almost like a narrower version of a *lama* pagoda. The majority of the surviving examples all date from the Ming dynasty period.<sup>634</sup>

#### **2.2.6. Pagoda ‘features’ included in the HEAP Database:**

While the pre-existing typology of Chinese pagodas is a useful tool, it is one that has been created within the narrative of a national architectural history of China. Different styles of pagoda exist in both the Korean peninsula and Japan that would not readily fit into this classification system.<sup>635</sup> Equally, when writing about the religious architecture of the Liao period, Guo Daiheng has pointed to a lack of precision in the terminology relating to Chinese architecture.<sup>636</sup> These issues become magnified further when the terminology is translated into English, as we can see from the debate around the appropriate translation for the term *zaojing* (藻井) between Kuhn and Steinhardt.<sup>637</sup>

In the specific case of pagoda typology, there are certain pagodas that may fall between two or more of the styles that have been listed in the previous section. As there is no ‘official’ definition for each of these pagoda types, the descriptions given in this chapter were drawn

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<sup>633</sup> Zhang Yijie, *Pagodas*. p.68.

<sup>634</sup> Ding Yuan, *Chinese Archit.* p.146.

<sup>635</sup> Examples include the ‘Silla type’ in Korea and the *tahōtō* in Japan, see respectively: Kim, *Korean Arts Vol. 3: Architecture*. p.124. and William Alex, *Japanese Architecture* (New York: George Brazillier, 1963). p.24.

<sup>636</sup> Guo Daiheng, “The Liao, Song, Xi Xia, and Jin Dynasties.” p.145.

<sup>637</sup> The alternatives proposed were ‘coffer’ and ‘lantern ceiling’ with a further suggestion that the term defies English translation, see: Kuhn, “‘Liao Architecture’: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?” p.341, and Steinhardt, “A Response to Dieter Kuhn, ‘Liao Architecture: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?’” p.460.

from a rough consensus based on my own interpretation of the available literature, but each of the texts can describe these pagoda styles slightly differently. As a result of these inconsistencies in the available typologies of pagoda styles, certain pagodas such as the Ming dynasty Chongwen Pagoda in Shaanxi, can be interpreted as both a *miyan* pagoda because of the style of its eaves but also a *lounge* pagoda due to its multiple interior storeys.<sup>638</sup>

Rather than trying to force the pagodas recorded within the HEAP Database to fit a pre-established typology, the database instead focusses on individual structural features. As the information, within the protected sites lists, about each individual pagoda is limited, all of the features recorded had to be visually identifiable from images of the pagodas in question. While the features included are by no means an exhaustive list of all the possible variations in pagoda design, it is hoped that they should be able to give a reasonable impression of the shape and structure of each of the included pagodas. As such, the combination of these features should be sufficient to establish the position of Liao pagoda designs within an East Asian context. Each of these features can be compared and contrasted - either individually or in tandem - to give a sense of the similarities and differences pagodas produced in the Liao polity have with the rest of the dataset. A full list of the recorded features, and the definition that was used for each, is included below:

- Primary construction material: The pagodas in the HEAP Database can be divided among five separate construction materials: brick, wood, stone, iron and ceramic.<sup>639</sup>

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<sup>638</sup> For both of these interpretations, see respectively: Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.162. and Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. p.108.

<sup>639</sup> Examples of iron and ceramic pagoda can be found at Yuquansi in Hubei and Yongquansi in Fujian, see: Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.89 and p.114.

When pagodas are constructed of more than one material, the primary structural component is given precedent. Therefore, the pagodas built south of the Yangzi that sometimes feature a timber exterior over a brick built structural core are classified as ‘brick’ within the database.<sup>640</sup>

- Number of sides: This figure is based on the shape of the exterior ground plan of the pagoda in question. The ‘exterior’ has to be specified as it is possible for pagodas to have a different internal and external shape, such as at the Songyuesi Pagoda which has twelve sides on the outside but only eight on the inside.<sup>641</sup> Equally, the ‘ground plan’ has to be specified as some pagodas have a different shape at the upper level and finial than they do at ground level, such as at the Jixian White Pagoda.<sup>642</sup> There are recorded examples of pagodas within the database that have circular, square, hexagonal, octagonal and dodecagonal ground plans.
- Current number of eaves: Some pagodas, such as the Dayan Pagoda in Xi’an are known to have had their number of eaves change over time as a result of both damage and rebuilding.<sup>643</sup> As this cannot be known for each pagoda, only the current number of eaves is recorded in this field. For pagodas with a double-eaved design (definition below), each set of double-eaves is recorded as a single eave. Thus, the Qingzhou White Pagoda in Fig. 2.10, is considered to have a seven-eaved design by the HEAP Database (as opposed to thirteen if the double eaves were counted separately). Among the recorded pagodas, the number of eaves can vary between zero and sixteen, with the majority of pagodas adopting an odd numbered design.

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<sup>640</sup> For more on this style of pagoda, see: Zhang Yuhuan, *A Record of Ancient Pagodas*. p.87.

<sup>641</sup> Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*. p.206.

<sup>642</sup> The lower half of this pagoda is octagonal and the upper half circular, see: Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.268.

<sup>643</sup> Xiong, *Sui-Tang Chang’an: A Study in the Urban History of Medieval China*. pp.260-1.

- Interior access: While the majority of pagodas all have some sort of interior space, the HEAP Database classifies ‘interior access’ as a pagoda with above ground interior space that is intended for human entry. Some pagodas may have large *digong* underground, but this is not included within this category.
- Multi-storey: To be classified as ‘multi-storey’, a pagoda must have ‘interior access’ at multiple levels within the building. At some pagodas, such as the Xiaoyan Pagoda in Xi’an, the interior storeys do not necessarily correspond to the exterior levels of the pagoda as demarcated by their eaves.<sup>644</sup> The number of interior storeys, however, is not recorded by the HEAP Database.
- Current height: As with the number of eaves, the current height of any given pagoda may be different to its height when it was first constructed. Within the HEAP Database, only the current height of the building is provided. The figure for each pagoda is given in metres and rounded to one decimal place.
- Exterior sculpture: This category simply records the presence, or lack thereof, of Buddhist sculpture carved onto the exterior of each pagoda. The HEAP Database does not record what the sculpted images are of in each case. Buddhist visual culture is a vast independent field of study in its own right providing far too many variables for a database of this kind.<sup>645</sup> Equally, in the majority of cases there could be debate in the interpretation of which figures or images are being portrayed in these artworks.
- *Dougong* (斗拱) brackets (Fig. 2.11): *Dougong* bracket sets are one of the key structural components of East Asian timber architecture, providing the load bearing function that allows for the extended eaves that we frequently witness on the buildings of this

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<sup>644</sup> For the Xiaoyan Pagoda, see: Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.38.

<sup>645</sup> On the difficulties of identifying Buddhist artwork, see: Klemens Karlsson, “The Formation of Early Buddhist Visual Culture,” *Material Religion* 2, no. 1 (2006): 68–95. pp.70-71.



region.<sup>646</sup> They are comprised of two separate interlocking elements: a large wooden block called the *dou* which provides a base for the bow-shaped arms known as *gong*. As Qiao Yun notes, these bracket components can be multiplied upwards and outwards almost endlessly to create a myriad of different designs.<sup>647</sup> In his initial survey of the Yingxian Timber Pagoda, Liang Sicheng recorded fifty-six different variations at this structure alone.<sup>648</sup> It is for this reason that just the presence of *dougong* are recorded by the HEAP Database rather than specifying the precise form.<sup>649</sup> Within the HEAP Database there are timber pagodas that include *dougong* as a functional element of the building, but there are also examples of these brackets being imitated beneath the eaves of brick-built pagodas as well. Both real and imitation *dougong* are not distinguished between by this field of the database.<sup>650</sup>

- Corbelled eaves: Corbelling is the process by which a structure can be progressively built out from the vertical. It is a technique that is in no way specific to East Asia and has been in use since at least the fourth millennium BCE.<sup>651</sup> This technique is used in both brick and stone-built pagodas and is recorded in the HEAP Database as a binary field. It is worth noting that it is possible for pagodas to have both *dougong* brackets and corbelled eaves at different levels of the building.<sup>652</sup>

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<sup>646</sup> There is extended literature available on both the form and function of *dougong* brackets, some select example include: Feng, *Chinese Architecture and Metaphor: Song Culture in the “Yingzao Fashi” Building Manual*. and 漢寶德 Han Baode, *The Origin and Development of Dougong Bracket Sets*, 斗栱的起源與發展 (Taizhong: Jingyuxiang Chubanshe (出版社), 1973).

<sup>647</sup> 喬勻 Qiao Yun, “Introduction Part II,” in *Chinese Architecture*, ed. Nancy Steinhardt and Xinian Fu (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). p.7.

<sup>648</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.242.

<sup>649</sup> This is certainly an area in which the HEAP Database could be expanded in future, the *Architectura Sinica* project already allows for buildings to be searched by their specific bracket elements, see: <https://architecturasinica.org/terminology.html> (accessed 19/10/2018).

<sup>650</sup> This is something that will likely be changed in later versions of the database, as it is an important distinction. It is, however, currently still relatively easy to separate those pagodas with functional and imitation *dougong* brackets by simply filtering the database using the ‘primary construction material’ field.

<sup>651</sup> Barrow tombs on the island of Orkney have been using this technique from this period, see: Francis Ching, Mark Jarzombek, and Vikramaditya Prakash, *A Global History of Architecture*, 2nd ed. (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2011). p.22.

<sup>652</sup> This is a phenomenon we regularly see in Liao pagodas, where just the first eave has *dougong* and the rest are corbelled out, see: Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas*. p.146.

- Dense eaves: While the ‘*miyan*’ designation appears to be one of the key factors for organising pagodas in the Chinese literature, it is difficult to apply a universal rule to explain at what point eaves should be considered ‘densely’ packed together. The variation among pagodas in the survey region for both height and number of eaves makes the provision of a specific measurement impossible. While any criteria for dense eaves will be a subjective decision, there does still need to be definition in place that can be adhered to consistently for the category to have any heuristic value. The working definition that has been used for the HEAP Database is to calculate the distance between the first and last eave of the building as a percentage of its overall height. This percentage must then meet a threshold based on the number of eaves the pagoda has to see if the eaves should be considered ‘dense’.<sup>653</sup> Pagodas with less than three eaves are not considered for this feature.
- Double eaves – Pagodas are considered to have a double-eaved design by the HEAP Database when eaves are placed in pairs with each pair being evenly spaced throughout the overall height of the building. An example of this double-eaved design can be witnessed at the Qingzhou White Pagoda in Fig. 2.10. Double eaves are most commonly seen in pagodas with multiple interior storeys, as the second eave provides a platform (平座) upon which those climbing the pagoda could walk around the exterior of the structure.
- Miniature – A pagoda is classed as being ‘miniature’ within the HEAP Database if its size would not allow for an accessible interior space above ground. Miniature pagodas often present a scaled-down version of the design of much larger examples, sometimes

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<sup>653</sup> These thresholds are: three eaves – fifty percent, five eaves – sixty percent, seven eaves – sixty-five percent, nine eaves – seventy percent, eleven eaves – seventy-five percent, thirteen eaves or more – eighty percent.

giving the impression of having multiple storeys despite this being an impossibility based on their stature.<sup>654</sup>

- Stupa shaped: While many pagodas in China adopt a shape more reminiscent of the design of Indian or Tibetan stupas and are classed as *lama* pagodas in the Chinese literature (such as the Miaoyingsi Pagoda in Fig. 2.6), others are more difficult to place within this one category. The majority of non-*lama* pagodas within the HEAP Database have a final eave and roof that matches the rest of the structure, but some have an upper level that take on a ‘stupa-like’ shape distinct from the rest of the building. This can be seen in the Liao pagodas at Yunjusi and Jixian.<sup>655</sup> The ‘stupa shaped’ classification in the HEAP Database refers to both pagodas that completely adopt the ‘stupa style’ design, as well as those that only have this feature at the upper level of the building. Unfortunately, this field is one that requires a level of interpretation on the part of the database’s creator as it is impossible to form an accurate definition that would cover the wide array of ‘stupa-style’ shapes that we find among East Asian pagodas.<sup>656</sup>
- Extended base – The base of a pagoda is considered to be ‘extended’ when the distance from the ground to the first eave is more than double the distance between the first and second eave. This additional space before the first eave can be used to accommodate additional features within the base itself and also provide room for the *tashen* or ‘pagoda body’ to be extended.
- Additional base elements – A pagoda is considered to possess ‘additional base elements’ if something is placed between the main body of the building and the foundations upon which it is based. This category therefore covers a wide array of

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<sup>654</sup> See, for example, the ceramic pagoda at Yongquansi in Fujian: Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*, p.114.

<sup>655</sup> Both of which will be explored further in Chapter 3.

<sup>656</sup> This variation is reflected in the alternative titles given to *lama* pagodas in the Chinese literature such as: ‘bottle shaped’ (*pingxing* 瓶形), ‘upturned-bowl’ *fubo* (覆钵), and ‘raspberry style’ (*fupenshi* 覆盆式).

potential alterations to the base of any given pagoda. These can range from a simple platform through to the complex Sumeru altars we see in certain Liao designs (such as at the Tianningsi pagoda in Fig. 2.5).<sup>657</sup>

- Lotus base – One of the potential ‘additional base elements’ is something known as a ‘lotus base’ (*yinglian* 迎蓮) and can be seen in Fig. 2.12. This feature has been separated from the other ‘additional base elements’ because its specific association with Liao period pagodas could provide a practical direction for observing potential Liao innovation.<sup>658</sup>

### **2.2.7. Location, visibility and date in the HEAP Database:**

Alongside these specific features, the HEAP Database also records the latitude and longitude of each pagoda in decimal degrees (DD) to an accuracy of four decimal places. Given that all the recorded pagodas in the database fall between a longitude of twenty and forty-five degrees, this means that the location for each individual example should be accurate to between approximately eight and ten metres.<sup>659</sup> The co-ordinates for the HEAP Database were obtained by locating each pagoda from the satellite imagery available through the Google Maps project. For those pagodas that could not be located through satellite imagery, the nearest location in the address listed for the building was provided instead. These pagodas

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<sup>657</sup> For a breakdown of the potential different elements of a pagoda base, see: Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. pp.28-30.

<sup>658</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas*. p.152.

<sup>659</sup> Decimal degrees are the standard format for co-ordinates in the majority of web-based mapping software such as Google maps, for more info and how to calculate accuracy, see: David Hoffman, *Effective Database Design for Geoscience Professionals* (Tulsa: Pennwell, 2003). pp.120-123.

were marked as not having a ‘confirmed location’ so that they could be removed from any analysis that required precise location data.

The base maps used for the HEAP Database have been generated using the Google Maps API and are therefore presented in Mercator projection (Fig. 2.13).<sup>660</sup> As well as the regional base map, a second base map showing the Liao administrative circuits is also available for maps exploring just the Liao polity.<sup>661</sup> Each pagoda is displayed on the chosen base map with a two layered circle. The colour of the inner circle for each pagoda represents the primary construction material, with the outer circle representing the polity responsible for its construction. A colour key for this information is available in Fig. 2.14, and also provides a guide for all of the most common colours likely to be encountered in maps generated by the HEAP Database.<sup>662</sup>

To avoid situations where pagodas cannot be seen on the map due to their geographical proximity, a ‘de-clutter offset’ can be applied. This removes the base map and places a visible gap between each pagoda so that any connection lines drawn between them can be seen on the output map. Fig. 2.15 shows the HEAP Database at a regional scale without the ‘de-clutter’ offset applied with many pagodas seen to be overlapping on the map. If the offset is applied as in Fig. 2.16, we can see that every individual pagoda site becomes visible. This

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<sup>660</sup> Google Maps (2017), ZENRIN. Given the large scale of the region covered by the HEAP Database, a scale is provided at three different latitudes on the base map to compensate for the disparity in the Mercator projection at different latitudes.

<sup>661</sup> This map is reproduced from: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Liao\\_circuits.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Liao_circuits.png) (accessed 17/08/17) under a Creative Commons license.

<sup>662</sup> Any relevant information not covered by this key will be explained in text or the figure description. The HEAP Database also has an option to change the colour settings if this is required by the user.

is useful for any analysis that favours exploring the connections between pagodas over a need for precise geographical accuracy.

The co-ordinates recorded within the HEAP Database have also been used to generate local elevation and visibility maps based on the topography in a five-kilometre radius around every pagoda in the database. Topographical elevation data is drawn from publicly available SRTM (Shuttle Radar Topography Mission) data. It is important to note that SRTM data for regions outside the USA takes the average height across an approximately ninety metre area meaning that it lacks the precision of many local topographic surveys but should be sufficient to give a sense of the immediate topography around each pagoda.<sup>663</sup> Each of the elevation and visibility maps in the HEAP Database consists of an eleven by eleven cell grid, with each cell representing one square kilometre. The number in each cell of all three maps represents the height of the land above sea level at that point. An example set of elevation and visibility maps are provided in Fig. 2.17.

For the elevation map, the colour of each cell represents the height above sea level when compared to the lowest point on that particular map. From the elevation maps it is possible to quantify the elevation extent of the pagoda site with respect to the local topography. This information is used to generate the other two maps for each pagoda that assess the visibility of the site within its local area. These are referred to as ‘base’ and ‘top’ visibility maps, with the ‘base’ map measuring the visibility of the site chosen for the pagoda and the ‘top’ map measuring the visibility of the pagoda itself.

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<sup>663</sup> For more on SRTM data, the official site is available at the following address: <https://www2.jpl.nasa.gov/srtm/> (accessed 04/05/2016).

For the purposes of these maps, visibility is assumed as long as the line-of-sight between the chosen cell on the map and the pagoda is not blocked by changes in elevation. Any buildings or vegetation that may have existed between the two points are not taken into account as this is not available through the SRTM data used to create the visibility maps (and also may have changed over time since each pagoda's construction). Each of the eleven by eleven cells on the visibility maps is colour coded to indicate visibility of the site from that specific point. The pagoda is then given a 'visibility index' score based on the percentage of cells from which it is visible. Alongside this percentage, the 'visibility index' can also be summarised in a five point scale: very low visibility (<25%), 'low visibility' (25-40%), 'medium visibility' (40-60%), 'high visibility' (60-90%) and 'very high visibility' (>90%).

The final consideration for each pagoda is information regarding the date and polity of construction. Of the 557 pagodas included within the HEAP Database, 283 have been dated to a specific year. Those pagodas without a specified date of construction are listed within the HEAP Database as not having a 'confirmed date' so that they can be removed from any analysis that relies on the precise date of the buildings in question. Pagodas without a confirmed date are normally recorded in the protected sites lists as having been built by a particular polity (or occasionally within a specific reign era). While the HEAP Database accepts the dates as they are recorded, it must be acknowledged that there could have been issues with the methodologies in dating each of these pagodas to a particular polity when no specific date has been recorded historically. The traditional chronological typology for pagodas that was discussed earlier in this chapter could quite easily lead to misattributions

based on a pagoda's similarity to examples produced by a particular dynasty or within a particular period.

As some pagodas are listed by polity, this means they could have been built at any point within a range of dates. For long lasting polities such as the Tang, this could mean a range of over three hundred years. The HEAP Database therefore includes not only the earliest and latest possible date of construction for each pagoda but also a mean date between the two. This provides a variety of options when it comes to analysis. For example, if one was attempting to do an analysis of just pagodas built prior to the tenth century, that analysis could be repeated using the fields for earliest and latest possible date of construction to observe any changes this might have on the results.

Another potential issue is that sometimes we find that the polity that constructed the original pagoda at a site is sometimes recorded even when the pagoda has since been rebuilt. Where possible, pagodas have been cross-referenced against the pagoda surveys carried out by Zhang Yuhuan and Cheng Peng to check if they had subsequently been rebuilt or had major restorations.<sup>664</sup> The HEAP Database, therefore, records the date of both the original and current structure at every pagoda site where this information is available. This means that any analysis carried out using the HEAP Database can choose to use the following options for the date of construction of the pagodas included in that enquiry: 'earliest possible date of original structure', 'mean date of original structure', 'latest possible date of original structure', 'earliest possible date of current structure', 'mean date of current structure' and 'latest

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<sup>664</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas.*, and Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas.*



possible date of current structure’. Any of these categories can also be further filtered to only include pagodas with a confirmed date, or to remove pagodas that are recorded as having received major subsequent restorations. Unless stated otherwise, all analysis is conducted using ‘mean date of the current structure’ as this has been set as the HEAP Database default. It is, however, recommended to repeat any analyses using different options for the date of construction to see how this impacts the results.

The HEAP Database therefore comprises three datasets in relation to each of the included pagodas: the physical features of the structure, the pagodas location and the approximate date in which it was built. No previous database of East Asian pagoda architecture has combined these three separate elements - but all three are essential to achieving the goal of this study of trying to establish the East Asian context of Liao pagoda design. In the next section we will explore the functions that have been programmed into the HEAP Database to help achieve this goal.

### **2.3. Functions and analytical tools available in the HEAP Database:**

The HEAP Database has been programmed to carry out a variety of statistical and spatial analysis functions and provide visualisations of the results. It should be noted that for each of the functions explored below, the HEAP Database can first be filtered to create a ‘working list’ of pagodas for that particular analysis. Should the user only want to analyse the pagodas of a specific polity or period, or only those possessing a specific feature, these filters can be applied before generating the ‘working list’.

Each of the functions below has been programmed into the HEAP Database to be as accessible as possible to the end user. Once the user has chosen the function they want to use and set the parameters of the working list, each of the visualisations are generated automatically within Microsoft Excel with no need for either external plugins or an internet connection. This means that when the HEAP Database is released, anyone that downloads it should be able to utilise all of these functions to engage with their own research questions about pagodas in East Asia. The HEAP Database has also been set up in such a way as to allow it to be easily converted to accommodate other data-sets than pagodas and it is hoped that this project will act as ‘proof-of-concept’ for potential further adoption.

### **2.3.1. Statistics worksheet:**

The statistics worksheet was created to provide a statistical overview of the entire HEAP Database. Working down the sheet are a series of tables with different characteristic breakdowns (for example: by polity, by current nation, or by construction material). Working across the sheet is the analysis of those characteristics in terms of a variety of averages, minimums, maximums and numbers of sites of a given type. As an example, a breakdown of the height of pagodas according to their ‘primary construction material’ has been reproduced in Fig. 2.18. To find this information one would scroll down the statistics worksheet to the ‘primary construction material’ section and then across to the breakdown according to height.

Three shades of green are used to highlight data correlation, with light green indicating that the value represents sixty percent of the total for that field, mid-green representing a correlation of seventy-five percent and dark green representing ninety percent. The

correlation is highlighted if a single cell or two adjacent cells combined meet the above criteria. In the case of the example table in Fig. 2.18, we can see that there is a strong correlation between iron, stone and ceramic pagodas and a short height of less than twenty metres. Wooden pagodas are likely to be constructed to a height of between eleven and thirty metres and brick pagodas appear in an array of different heights but would form a bell curve with its peak at somewhere between twenty-one and thirty metres. The statistics worksheet therefore provides an efficient means by which to identify areas that may potentially warrant further study and analysis.

### **2.3.2. Scatter diagrams:**

The 'scatter diagram' function of the HEAP Database plots the values of any two variables from the database along its two axes with the pattern of the resulting points revealing any correlation present. An example scatter diagram comparing 'pagoda height' against 'mean date of construction for current structure' is reproduced in Fig. 2.19. The scatter diagram can either be drawn precisely (with inherent overlaps between pagodas as seen in the example), or in a 'de-cluttered' form so that every point is made visible at the expense of some accuracy in the final image.

There are also options for overlays that can be applied to the scatter chart. 'Average lines' can be drawn to demonstrate the average value for both axes across both the current 'working list' and the full database. Also, for scatter charts where 'date of construction' is selected as the x-axis, a column can be added to highlight the period of a particular polity (in the case of

the example scatter chart in Fig. 2.19, the Liao have been selected).<sup>665</sup> Finally, a horizontal trend-line can be added that provides an average of all the points on the scatter chart at each x-axis coordinate. Each point is smoothed with the values in a corridor to its left and right, so that the line gives a more general trend.

### **2.3.3. Comparison table:**

The ‘comparison table’ is used to compare the average values for pagodas in a user-specified working list to the average values for pagodas across the whole HEAP Database. The example table in Fig. 2.20 has been drawn based on a working list of only the stone-built pagodas in the database. A positive difference between the working list and the full database is recorded in black, with a negative difference highlighted in red. Note that for numerical fields such as height, the difference between the working list and the full database is recorded as both a number and a percentage. This table provides a practical means of identifying unique or unusual features within a particular working list. For example, in Fig. 2.20, we can identify that stone pagodas are significantly shorter than the database average.

### **2.3.4. ‘Single feature’ map:**

The ‘single feature’ map allows the user to choose one feature from the HEAP Database to examine individually. Each pagoda in the working list is plotted on the map and connections between nearby pagodas that share the same value for the chosen feature are linked together

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<sup>665</sup> Note that if the ‘date of construction’ value used is for the ‘current structure’, as it has been in this example table, the scatter chart will show pagodas from beyond the survey period unless specified otherwise.

with a coloured line. The example map in Fig. 2.21 demonstrates a ‘single feature’ map that has been produced based on the ‘number of sides’ feature. As we can see, connections are colour coded based on the shared value – in this example that means square pagodas are joined with a red line, hexagonal pagodas with a green line and octagonal pagodas with a blue line.<sup>666</sup> This function can be used to evaluate regional preferences for certain features. For example, in Fig. 2.21, the preference for square pagoda designs in the Korean peninsula is clearly visible. By default, the ‘single feature’ map draws connections between the nearest five pagodas, but this can be specified by the user to any value between one and ten. If there are no pagodas within the specified value that share the same feature, then no lines are drawn.

#### **2.3.5. ‘Spread over time’ map:**

The ‘spread over time’ map is used to demonstrate a potential route for the geographical spread over time of pagodas within a working list based on their date of construction. An example map has been provided in Fig. 2.22 to show the potential ‘spread over time’ of Tang dynasty pagodas with *dougong* brackets. The earliest site in the working list is drawn with a coloured square around it, to show that this is the location of the first known occurrence. Each of the other pagodas on the map are linked to the nearest earlier pagoda by means of an arrow going from the earlier example to the later example. The arrows vary in thickness depending on the chronological proximity to the construction of the originating pagoda. Those pagodas that are built most recently after the first example receive the thickest line with those built latest receiving the thinnest. While proximity is not necessarily the deciding

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<sup>666</sup> Note that in a binary field that just recorded the presence, or lack thereof, of a certain feature (such as ‘*dougong* brackets’ or ‘interior access’) these are always marked with a blue line for pagodas that have the feature and a red line for those that do not. See the colour key in Fig. 2.14.

factor in the adoption of new designs, the ‘spread over time’ map at least offers a potential model that can provide the foundation for further research.

### **2.3.6. ‘Spread by similarity’ map:**

The ‘spread by similarity’ map works in a similar way to the ‘spread over time’ map discussed above, but with a few caveats. Rather than just drawing an arrow between the two nearest sites in the working list, the ‘spread by similarity’ map only draws an arrow if the two pagodas in question share a user specified number of features. The number of matching features is referred to as the ‘similarity index’ and can be specified at any value between one and fifteen. The higher the value, the more likely the pagodas are to have a similar overall design. If there are any pagodas that do not meet the minimum ‘similarity index’ with any other pagodas in the working list, then these pagodas will be drawn with a white square around them to demonstrate the lack of connections. Arrows for the ‘spread by similarity’ map are drawn in green to differentiate them from ‘spread over time’ maps.

An example ‘spread by similarity’ map can be seen in Fig. 2.23, using the same working list of Tang dynasty pagodas with *dougong* brackets that was used for the ‘spread over time’ map but with a ‘similarity index’ requirement of nine or more shared features. If the pagodas are still connected in this map, this is indicative of a much closer holistic design than is indicated by the ‘spread over time’ function. The ‘spread by similarity’ function can also be used to prioritise local connections by applying a ‘distance offset’ that increases the ‘similarity index’ threshold depending on the distance between two pagodas. This is to account for the potential decrease in likelihood of architectural designs spreading over greater distances. There are

three different levels of ‘distance offset’ and a table showing how these are applied can be seen in Fig. 2.24. It is recommended to perform the ‘spread by similarity’ function both with and without the ‘distance offset’ applied and then to compare the results. As we can see in Fig. 2.25, by applying even a ‘low distance offset’ to the current working list, the group of pagodas in Shaanxi is more clearly highlighted and provides the suggestion that the addition of *dougong* may have been part of a vernacular tradition that spread throughout this specific local area.

### 2.3.7. ‘Feature connectivity’ map:

The ‘feature connectivity’ map works in a similar way to the ‘single feature’ map by drawing connections between nearby pagodas.<sup>667</sup> Rather than looking at a single feature, however, it takes six different features, each represented by its own coloured line. Pagodas that have the same value for one of the specified features receive the coloured line for that feature drawn between them. Therefore, the more coloured lines that there are represented between two pagodas, the more features they share out of the specified list.

The example map in Fig. 2.26 continues to use the working list of Tang pagodas with *dougong* brackets but focusses in on the Shaanxi region. A ‘de-clutter’ offset has been applied to make the connections clearer (this is always recommended for ‘feature connectivity maps to add some clarity to the visualisation). This example demonstrates that the majority of the pagodas in this local area share all six connections with nearby pagodas.

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<sup>667</sup> Like the ‘single feature map’, the number of nearby pagodas to use is set to five by default but can be changed to any value between one and ten.

The connections that branch off to more distant examples, however, appear to share significantly fewer of the specified features. This could suggest that the Shaanxi examples might represent a separate tradition to those outside this region. The feature connectivity map is useful to build on analysis from the ‘single feature’ map by comparing multiple connections. It can also build from the ‘spread by similarity’ map as it allows the user to specify the six features chosen, rather than using the full set of features included in the HEAP Database.

### **2.3.8. ‘Venn diagram’ maps:**

This ‘Venn diagram’ function allows for the creation of ‘sets’ of sites based on user-defined working lists. The geographic extent of each ‘set’ is then displayed on the map allowing for comparison between them. The name for the ‘Venn diagram’ function arose because the original concept was to identify geographical areas of commonality between two or more working lists and visualise this on a map. The resulting map would therefore have the appearance of the cartographic equivalent of a traditional Venn diagram. For example, Fig. 2.27 compares the geographical distribution of all the pagodas constructed by the Liao to all those constructed by the Jin. The area that appears within the boundaries of both sets could be seen as an area of potential interaction in terms of architectural styles between the two polities.

The ‘Venn diagram’ function has, however, proved to have greater applicability beyond this original function. Another practical application could be to compare the geographical distribution of a working list in different periods to track the potential spread over time of a



certain feature or set of features. Equally, the geographical distribution of a specific pagoda design could be compared to the geographical extent of all its individual features to attempt to ascertain where the inspiration for those features may have originated.

### **2.3.9. ‘Potential influence’ tables and maps:**

The ‘potential influences’ function provides a means to automatically search for situations where a pagoda built by one polity may have been influenced by the features of an earlier pagoda (or pagodas) built by a different polity. These pagodas with potential influence over another polity are referred to as ‘originating sites’. For the purposes of this analysis, a pagoda is considered to be an ‘originating site’ for a feature at a later pagoda if it is both the nearest earlier example to possess that feature and it was constructed by a different polity. These potential influences can be viewed individually, observing the specific features of how each pagoda may have been influenced, or they can be viewed in a summary table that combines all of this data to see which polities may have had the most potential influence over other polities.

An example summary table can be seen for potential influences on the Jin in Fig. 2.28. These potential influences can also be displayed on a map, with each ‘originating site’ having an arrow drawn to the site it may have influenced. An example map has been produced for all of the potential influences on Jin pagodas in Fig. 2.29. These maps can also be filtered to only show ‘originating sites’ from a single polity which could help to build an impression of the connections between specific polities in terms of pagoda design.

### 2.3.10. ‘Polity, period, place’ analysis:

The final function included in the HEAP Database is used to assess the impact that the polity, period and place of construction may have had on a pagoda’s design. The analysis compares every pagoda within the working list to every other pagoda within that list. Each comparison yields a ‘similarity index’ score that identifies the number of features that they share out of the fifteen features identified in the HEAP Database. An average of these ‘similarity index’ scores is then provided based on the polity, period and place in which the pagodas were constructed.<sup>668</sup>

An example result of this analysis can be seen in Fig. 2.30 based on a working list of just pagodas built in Japan. As we can see, out of all the pagodas constructed in Japan, those built in the same polity shared an average of 12.9 out of the fifteen available features. Pagodas built within two-hundred kilometres of each other shared an average of 12.52 features and pagodas built within one hundred years of each other shared an average of 12.71 features. Where ‘no data’ is recorded, this means that there were pagodas within the working list that did not have any other pagodas that met the criteria for comparison (ie. there were no other pagodas in the list built by the same polity or within the same specified region or period). The percentage given at the top of the table expresses the percentage of pagodas that were most similar based on either polity, period or place. Therefore, in the example table, we can see that being built by the same polity had a bigger impact in Japan than being built in the same period or local area.

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<sup>668</sup> Note that it is only fifteen features, as height is not included due to the fact that there are too many potential options within this field to yield a precise match.

Each ‘polity, period, place’ table also provides combined results from all three fields to see if different combinations of polity, period and place yield different results. It should also be noted that both the distance for the ‘place’ field and the number of years listed for the ‘period’ field can be set by the user to see how this impacts the results. The figures of two-hundred kilometres and one-hundred years are the default values provided by the HEAP Database.

#### **2.3.11. HEAP Database summary:**

While the HEAP Database is by no means an exhaustive list of all the pagodas (or even all the extant pagodas) that existed in the East Asian region, it is hoped that it will provide a substantial enough sample size to begin to observe Liao pagodas within their regional context. As a result, these structures can be observed outside the traditional Chinese historical paradigms in which they are usually framed. In all, there are 557 pagodas recorded within the database, of which seventy-seven were constructed under the Liao polity. The fact that the database extends beyond the Liao not only regionally, but chronologically as well, suggests that we may be able to explore potential earlier influences for Liao pagoda design and the impact that Liao designs may have had both during and after the Liao period.

With sixteen different features recorded for each pagoda, along with, date, location, elevation and visibility data, the HEAP Database’s main table has over thirty-thousand cells of recorded data. When this is combined with the statistical and GIS based analytical tools that have been programmed into the database, it has the potential to open previously unexplored

approaches to not just Liao pagodas, but East Asian pagodas and architecture more generally. The analysis in the following chapter acts not only as a means to further our understanding of the Liao polity but also as a ‘proof-of-concept’ for taking a data-led approach to studies of East Asian architecture. The HEAP Database remains a work in progress, and it is hoped that additional features and functions will be added in future.

### **Chapter 3 – Using the HEAP Database - an analysis of Liao pagodas in their regional and chronological context:**

Although much of the previous scholarship on Liao pagodas has been from an art historical or religious studies perspective that does not lend itself to quantitative analysis, there are still a variety of avenues that prior research has opened up for exploration within this sphere.<sup>669</sup>

Of the statements that have been made regarding Liao pagodas in works on Chinese and East Asian Architecture, those that can be explored and challenged with evidence from the HEAP Database can be broadly categorised into three groups:

1. Statements identifying the typical features of Liao pagodas (including attempts to create a typology of individual Liao pagoda styles).
2. Statements about the changes to individual features of pagoda design that occurred during the Liao period (including the role that Liao pagodas may have had in those changes).
3. Statements regarding the dynasties or polities believed to have influenced Liao pagoda design, as well as those dynasties and polities that may have, in turn, been influenced by the design of Liao pagodas.

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<sup>669</sup> Of particular note here are the works of Kim and Shen, which have added greatly to our understanding of the function of Liao pagodas but do not contain any statements that can be tested using the fields available in the HEAP Database. See for example: Kim, “The Hidden Link: Tracing Liao Buddhism in Shingon Ritual.” Youn-mi Kim, “Virtual Pilgrimage and Virtual Geography: Power of Liao Miniature Pagodas (907-1125),” *Religions* 206 (2017): 1–29., Hsueh-Man Shen, “Realizing the Buddha’s ‘Dharma’ Body during the Mofa Period: A Study of Liao Buddhist Relic Deposits,” *Artibus Asiae* 61, no. 2 (2001): 263–303., and Hsueh-man Shen, “One Thing Contains All, and All Things Contain One: Huayan Buddhism and the Liao Pagodas,” in *Perspectives on the Liao* (New Haven: Bard Graduate Centre, 2010).

This chapter will explore the discussions in each of these three groups in light of the evidence and analytical tools provided by the HEAP Database. The limitations of the HEAP Database discussed in the previous chapter will be taken into account in the discussion of all three groups. It is important to note that the HEAP Database and its associated toolset is not intended to provide definitive answers to complex historical issues. Instead, it can provide visually demonstrable, quantitative evidence-based tools to test hypotheses that have previously been presented about historical East Asian pagodas.

### **3.1. What is a ‘Liao Pagoda’? Statements on the different styles of Liao pagodas and their typology:**

Defining what is signified by the term ‘Liao pagoda’ is perhaps more complex than it first appears. We have already discussed the difficulties surrounding the semantic range of the term pagoda. Even casting these difficulties aside, however, the question remains of what exactly it is that makes a pagoda ‘Liao’? For the creation of the HEAP Database, and for the purposes of this research so far, a ‘Liao pagoda’ has simply been classified as a pagoda that was produced during the Liao dynastic period on land claimed by the Liao dynasty. Among the extant examples we have recorded, are there any structural elements that we can definitively identify as ‘Liao’ features? Is there a recognisable ‘Liao’ style (or styles) of pagoda design that we could pick out from a line-up of images of pre-modern pagodas?

### 3.1.1. The archetypal ‘Liao’ pagoda:

Alexander Soper once noted that: ‘Liao architects seem to have deliberately exploited variety. As a general rule no scheme is found twice’.<sup>670</sup> This concept of a variegated corpus of Liao pagoda designs appears to be borne out by our collected data: there are surviving Liao pagodas built from brick, stone and wood, with four, six and eight sides, as well as eight different numbers of eaves in use across the assemblage. In fact, the Liao produced pagodas that cover almost every single variable for structural features that were programmed into the HEAP Database.<sup>671</sup> It is unsurprising then, that Liang Sicheng included the Liao dynasty in the ‘Period of Elaboration’ in his typology of pagoda design in China, an era that saw a marked increase in different pagoda plans over the preceding ‘Period of Simplicity’.<sup>672</sup>

Despite this level of variation, the table in Fig. 3.1 tells a somewhat different story. This table was generated by creating a working list based on each polity that constructed five or more pagodas that have not since been rebuilt. The working list for each polity was then searched to see how many of the pagodas produced by that polity shared the same holistic design (that is to say, that they share all the features programmed into the HEAP Database with at least one other pagoda in that working list). Of these polities, the Liao have the fourth highest percentage of pagodas that are matched based on holistic design – and the second highest of

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<sup>670</sup> Sickman and Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China*. p.259.

<sup>671</sup> While this at first may seem unsurprising, given that the database was created with Liao pagodas in mind, what is surprising is that in each of the individual features, there are pagodas built in the Liao that cover almost every variable - including almost every permutation for both number of sides and eaves.

<sup>672</sup> Liang suggests that the ‘Period of Elaboration’ lasted from c.1000-1300 but explicitly stated that this included Liao pagodas as all of the examples for which we have concrete dates were built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards, see: Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.266.

any polity based in what is now China. There is also no polity in the database with more pagodas than the Liao to have a higher percentage of matches.

This means that within the corpus of Liao pagodas there are more identical examples than can be found in those pagodas produced by either the Tang or the Song. To clarify, ‘identical’ in this instance, simply means sharing all of the same features programmed into the HEAP Database as opposed to being actually physically identical. Two pagodas could share the same features and yet still maintain different aesthetic or structural qualities not covered by the database. Even taking this into account, however, this level of Liao homogeneity does not suggest a programme of haphazardly building pagodas in different styles. Instead, it seems that the Liao may have helped to standardise pagoda design, perhaps in an attempt to project a specific image of the dynasty through a repeated design philosophy.

In his initial architectural surveys in China, Liang Sicheng had already begun to identify certain structural features as being distinctly ‘Liao’, pointing specifically to the recreation of wooden designs (similar to the wooden Liao pagoda at Fogongsi) in brick, a style he referred to as the ‘timber frame sub-type’.<sup>673</sup> He also recognised that Liao pagodas represented a move from square ground plans towards octagonal designs that was reflected across China during this period. Soper took Liang’s foundations a step further, laying down a list of features that he believed represented the archetypal ‘Liao style’ pagoda:

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<sup>673</sup> Liang Sicheng. p.267-270.



The distinguished features are an octagonal plan, and an elevation in which three stages – base, shaft and crown – are sharply differentiated. The base is fairly high and is subdivided into courses enriched by sculpture. The shaft is relatively plain, serving as a background for Buddhist groups in relief; some sort of corner accent maintains verticality. The crown is a series of close-set roofs, usually thirteen.

The bottom-most eaves are bracketed in a fashion based on Chinese carpentry; most often the rest will be corbelled out. The whole multiple crown diminishes as it rises, and is topped by some sort of spire.<sup>674</sup>

The example Soper gave of the Liao pagoda that most clearly demonstrates all of the above features is the Daming Pagoda situated in the Liao's central capital, Zhongjing (Fig. 3.2).<sup>675</sup>

Nancy Steinhardt has noted that Soper, among other authors (herself included), relied heavily on the work of Sekino and Takeshima for their research into Liao pagodas.<sup>676</sup> Despite publication in 1925, Sekino and Takeshima's research remains the predominant study of Liao dynasty pagodas and features images and descriptions of twenty-four extant examples.<sup>677</sup> The HEAP Database contains seventy-seven pagodas that were either originally constructed by

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<sup>674</sup> Sickman and Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China*. p.271.

<sup>675</sup> Sickman and Soper. p. 272.

<sup>676</sup> See: Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.388. and for the original Japanese language research, see: Sekino and Takeshima, *Liao-Jin Architecture and Its Buddhist Sculpture*.

<sup>677</sup> Two of which have since been destroyed, see: Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.388. The volatile nature of the region in the mid-twentieth century may also explain why no wider surveys have since been completed or, as Chen and Tong noted, that there have been no Japanese publications on Liao pagodas since the end of the Second World War: Chen Shushi and Tong Qiang, "An Outline of the Investigation and Research on the Chitan (960-1127) Buddhist Towers (辽塔相关调查及研究概述)." p.22. Other later surveys specifically focussing on Liao pagoda architecture come courtesy of Ma Lin, who surveyed the Liao pagodas of western Liaoning province, see: 馬琳 Ma Lin, "Political Function and Social Influence of Liao Buddhist Temple and Stupa in Western Liaoning (辽西地区辽代佛教寺塔的政治功能与社会影响)," *Journal of Liaoning Technical University* 14, no. 1 (2012): 9–13. And Zhao Bingbing and Chen Bochao who surveyed thirty-three Liao pagodas trying to explore their development, see: Zhao Bingbing and Chen Bochao, "The Development and Characters of Brick Masonry Towers in Liao Dynasty."

the Liao or rebuilt by the Liao on the site of an earlier pagoda. It will therefore be interesting to witness if Soper's description of the archetypal Liao pagoda remains accurate within the wider assemblage of the HEAP Database.

Soper's account of a typical Liao pagoda contains a variety of parameters that can be isolated in the HEAP Database. These are: an octagonal design, thirteen eaves, brick construction, as well as the presence of dense eaves, exterior relief sculpture, dougong brackets and corbelled eaves. By applying all of these filters to the Liao pagodas in the database, we are left with twenty examples - or just over a quarter of the listed Liao pagodas. With this being the case, even if the Liao were 'exploiting variety', it seems that they did have at least one archetypal pagoda form that can be identified from Soper's own definition. Both Liu Dunzhen and Zhang Yuhuan have since taken Soper's list of common Liao pagoda features a step further, making additions that correspond to the relevant HEAP Database variables of: additional base elements, an extended base before the first eave, and a lotus base.<sup>678</sup> Even with these extra filters applied though, the database still yields seventeen results that match all of these criteria.<sup>679</sup>

Soper, Liu Dunzhen and Zhang Yuhuan's lists of typical Liao features seem to stand up well to the Liao pagodas recorded in the HEAP Database. In fact, for each of the parameters listed above - even if we take them individually, the most common form among the corpus of Liao

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<sup>678</sup> Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.227. 张驭寰 Zhang Yuhuan, "One-Thousand Year Old Liao Pagodas (千年尚存的辽代佛塔)," *Zhongguo Zongjiao* 中国宗教 (2000): 48-49. p.48.

<sup>679</sup> It is worth noting here that Zhang's list does not contain corbelled eaves like Soper's. With this requirement removed, the HEAP Database yields twenty-one results among Liao pagodas.

pagodas was selected by each of these researchers. Of the Liao pagodas featured in the database:

- 96% are built primarily of brick.
- 82% have eight sides.
- 42% have thirteen eaves (the next most common number is seven eaves, but this represents just 16% of the dataset).
- 82% feature exterior relief sculpture.
- 95% feature *dougong* brackets.
- 61% feature corbelled eaves.
- 99% feature additional base elements.
- 93% have an extended base before the first eave.
- 67% feature a lotus base.<sup>680</sup>

The HEAP Database also contains some variables that were not mentioned by either Soper, Liu or Zhang. Of these variables, the most common forms among Liao pagodas are as follows:

- 91% do not feature multiple interior storeys.
- 95% are not miniaturised forms.
- 88% do not have a double eaved design.

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<sup>680</sup> Each rounded to the nearest whole percentage point.

- 89% do not feature a stupa-style top.<sup>681</sup>

With the addition of these variables, however, the number of pagodas that meet all of the available criteria does not change, matching the exact same seventeen of the seventy-seven Liao pagodas.

There have been various different suggestions made as to which pagoda is most representative of the typical Liao style. Both Soper and Steinhardt put forward the Daming Pagoda.<sup>682</sup> Alternative suggestions come from Zhang Yuhuan who, in his first monograph of Chinese pagodas, originally stated that the Chaoyang North Pagoda could be seen as representative of the Liao style and both Lou Qingxi and Wang Shaozhou, have suggested the Tianningsi Pagoda in Beijing as an alternative.<sup>683</sup> Of these three pagodas, only the Daming Pagoda contains all of the variables that comprise the ‘Liao Archetypal Style’ according to the HEAP Database. The square ground-plan of the Chaoyang North Pagoda immediately relegates it from the conversation and, although the Tianningsi Pagoda is more similar to the archetypal model, the lack of corbelled eaves means that it does not quite meet the full list of requirements.

Although it meets all of the requirements of a typical Liao pagoda, there is one feature of the Daming Pagoda that makes it stand out (quite literally) from the wider Liao pagoda corpus –

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<sup>681</sup> Rather than being overlooked, these likely did not need to be mentioned explicitly as they represent the absence rather than the presence of specific features. Therefore the assumed default position is that they would not be part of the design.

<sup>682</sup> Sickman and Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China*. Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*.

<sup>683</sup> See: Zhang Yuhuan, *Famous Pagodas of China*. and Lou Qingxi, *Twenty Essays on Chinese Architecture* (中國古建築: 二十講). Wang Shaozhou, *Chinese Vernacular Architecture Vol.3*. p.56.

its height. At over eighty metres tall, the Daming Pagoda is significantly taller than the average Liao pagoda height of 28.7 metres. There are, however, four pagodas that are within a ten percent deviation from this average height that also meet all of the HEAP Database criteria for a typical Liao pagoda: the Nongansi Pagoda, the Ximu Gold Pagoda, the Tayingzi Pagoda and the Liaobin Pagoda. Despite this, it could be argued that the location of Daming Pagoda in the central capital of Zhongjing, along with its imposing height, mean that it could be a deliberate visual representation of how the Liao wanted their pagodas to be both built and viewed.

One of the most debated issues around the design of Liao pagodas is how much originality they demonstrate. This debate is perhaps best encapsulated in the discussion, across multiple publications, between Kuhn and Steinhardt but it is also a consistent presence in the Chinese literature as well.<sup>684</sup> It therefore makes sense to question if this archetypal style of Liao pagodas represents an innovation, as has been previously suggested by both Steinhardt and Liu Dunzhen.<sup>685</sup> There are various ways in which the HEAP Database can be used to help provide evidence to support or refute this statement. The map in Fig. 3.3 uses the ‘Venn Diagram’ function of the HEAP Database to take each variable in the database and filter them to only include the option that most commonly occurs in the Liao (in other words, each individual feature of the archetypal Liao pagoda style).<sup>686</sup> It then displays the geographic extent of each of those features across the survey region.

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<sup>684</sup> The Kuhn-Steinhardt debate can be followed through the following publications: Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*., Kuhn, “‘Liao Architecture’: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?”, Steinhardt, “A Response to Dieter Kuhn, ‘Liao Architecture: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?’” Example discussions of the originality of Liao pagodas can be found in Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. pp.227-228, and Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas*. pp.155-156.

<sup>685</sup> Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.223.

<sup>686</sup> For more on the Venn diagram function, see Chapter 2.

What becomes clear from this schematic is that each of these individual typical Liao features occurs across a wide range of the survey region and that none are limited to land that was claimed by the Liao. All of the included features also extend across current national boundaries. Although many of the Liao features do not appear in Japan during the survey period, the majority do appear in both North and South Korea and across most of what is now China. The exception to this being the ‘lotus base’ (purple) which does not appear in most of the western half of the survey region. From this evidence, it would seem that there is no single aspect of the Liao archetypal pagoda design that is unique to pagodas constructed under the Liao polity.

If all of the most common Liao features are combined though, as they are in Fig. 3.4 we see a very different picture come to light. Pagodas that meet all of the individual feature requirements of the archetypal Liao pagoda style only appear within territory claimed by the Liao. This suggests that the archetypal Liao pagoda style could be a Liao innovation in design. Supporting this hypothesis is the fact that none of the pagodas with this combination of features pre-date the Liao, with the earliest example to have a confirmed date associated with it within the HEAP Database being the Daming Pagoda that began construction in 1007.<sup>687</sup> It remains a possibility that there may have been earlier pagodas built in the Liao style that are no longer extant but based just on those pagodas recorded in the HEAP Database, the Liao archetypal pagoda style represents a distinct category from anything that had come before. This flies in the face of the ‘sinification’ narrative that surrounds the Liao

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<sup>687</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *The Cream of Chinese Pagodas* (中國古塔精粹).

dynasty and lends support to the case that has always been advocated by Steinhardt in support of Liao innovation.<sup>688</sup>

Within the same geographical area that we find all of the Liao archetypal examples, there are also three Jin dynasty pagodas that meet all the requirements of the 'Liao Archetypal Style'. These are the Ningcheng Jin Small Pagoda, the Huangfusi Pagoda and the Liaoyang White Pagoda which were all built between 1158 and 1175. Other than these three Jin pagodas there are no other examples of the 'Liao Archetypal Style' of a non-Liao date within the survey period of the HEAP Database. These Jin examples are therefore likely to be evidence of a Jin dynasty continuation of the pre-existing localised Liao tradition in the area (a hypothesis that will be explored in greater detail in the third part of this chapter).

Putting aside the quantitative analysis of the HEAP Database for a moment and viewing the pagodas contained within from a purely aesthetic standpoint, there are no pagodas from prior to the Liao period that I would comfortably identify as looking the same, or even similar, to the pagodas of the 'Liao Archetypal Style'. Perhaps the closest example that can be found has already been identified by Liu Dunzhen as the Qixiasi Sheli Pagoda (Fig. 3.5), primarily due to similarities in shape and the design of the base.<sup>689</sup> In his typology of Chinese pagodas, Liang Sicheng also listed this pagoda as the direct precursor to the Liao Tianningsi Pagoda in Beijing.<sup>690</sup>

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<sup>688</sup> A case that Steinhardt makes in concluding her monograph on Liao architecture: Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. Conclusion.

<sup>689</sup> Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.227.

<sup>690</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.116.

The Qixiasi Pagoda was rebuilt in its current form under the Southern Tang during what would have been the early years of the Liao dynasty. This style of pagoda, however, appears to be an isolated example with no pagodas constructed in the same period or region featuring the same holistic design. The Qixiasi pagoda is also missing many of the most important Liao archetypal features such as: brick construction, dougong brackets and thirteen eaves. It is therefore difficult to envisage a model where this pagoda could have had as direct and profound an impact on pagoda construction in the Liao as previously suggested. Another area where the visual impression of this pagoda does not match a typical Liao example is in the design of its relief carving.

### **3.1.2. Iconography:**

As listed above, 88% of Liao pagodas in the HEAP Database feature some kind of exterior relief carving. Although it is not the purpose of this study to explore the different Buddhist images and iconography featured on the exterior of pagodas, it is worth mentioning at this juncture some of the most commonly carved scenes that we witness amongst the corpus of the surviving Liao pagodas.<sup>691</sup> As with the structural features noted above, the Daming Pagoda of the Liao's central capital, Zhongjing, also provides the archetype for what might be considered 'typical' Liao pagoda iconography. Of the seventy-seven pagodas in the database, sixty-three feature exterior relief carving of some description. Of these sixty-three, twenty-three feature either the same design or incorporate many elements of the exterior

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<sup>691</sup> This is in part due to it being outside the remit of my knowledge and partly the difficulties of cataloguing iconographic features within the database. For more on Liao Buddhist sculpture, the leading study in the field remains: Marion Gridley, *Chinese Buddhist Sculpture Under the Liao* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1993).



sculptural designs witnessed at the Daming Pagoda. The Daming Pagoda is unique in one respect however: the iconography is helpfully labelled, with each of the Bodhisattvas and stupas/pagodas featured named as a part of the motif.<sup>692</sup> These labels were first recorded and identified by Sekino and Takeshima and, despite the fact they could have potentially been added during a Qing dynasty restoration of the structure in 1854, have been accepted as accurately representing the iconography present on the pagoda's exterior in the Liao period.<sup>693</sup>

At Daming Pagoda, carved scenes surround the main shaft of the building, above the extended base section but before the first eave (see Fig. 3.6) on what is often referred to in the Chinese literature as the 'body' of the building.<sup>694</sup> Each of the eight sides follows a similar pattern: in the centre of each face there is a niche containing an image of the Buddha. The more elaborate design of the niche on the south face of the building denotes that this is the primary orientation of the structure.<sup>695</sup> Despite being slightly indented within its niche, each Buddha carving still protrudes from the body of the building by almost a metre. The Buddha niche on each face of the pagoda is flanked by two figures: Bodhisattvas on the cardinal faces and Heavenly Kings on the ordinal faces.<sup>696</sup> Above each of these figures is a decorated

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<sup>692</sup> Note that for Buddhist terminology, such as the names of the Bodhisattvas, I have used the Romanised form of the original Sanskrit rather than Chinese. The Romanisation of Sanskrit used follows the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST).

<sup>693</sup> Sekino and Takeshima, *Liao-Jin Architecture and Its Buddhist Sculpture*. This restoration date stems from the Mongolian inscription on the South face of the building that gives the reign date of Qing Xianfeng, see: Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.389. The inscription itself can be seen around the Buddha niche in Fig. 3.6.

<sup>694</sup> For a helpful breakdown of the different elements of the pagoda in Chinese architectural history, see: Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. pp.14-33.

<sup>695</sup> Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.389.

<sup>696</sup> 于海燕 Yu Haiyan, *Chifeng's Ancient Buddhist Pagodas*, 赤峰古代佛塔 (Hulunbuir: Nei Menggu Wenhua Chubanshe (内蒙古文化出版社), 2013). p.27.

canopy and above the canopy are images of flying Apsaras. Between the Apsaras and above the Buddha niche is a more elaborate canopy with four streamers hanging down.<sup>697</sup>

On the corners between each face of the pagoda are carvings designed to look like dharani pillars (see Fig. 3.7). Each of these pillars has been split into two sections, the upper section gives the name of one of the ‘Eight Great Stupas’ (八大靈塔) of the Buddhist tradition (which each of the eight dharani pillar carvings represent).<sup>698</sup> Starting with the pillar between the south and south-east faces and working around clockwise, these are as follows: the Kapilavastu Stupa, the Magadha Stupa, the Benares Stupa, the Jetavana Stupa, the Kanyakubja Stupa, the Rajagrhastupa, the Vaisali Stupa and the Kusinagara Stupa.<sup>699</sup> The lower half of each of the dharani pillars features the name of a Bodhisattva (again, presumably the one featured to the left or right of any of the given dharani carvings). Following the same order, the Bodhisattvas are identified as follows: Guanyin, Maitreya, Akasagarbha, Samantabhadra, Vajrapani, Manjusri, Sarvanivarana-Vishkambhin, and Ksitigarbha.<sup>700</sup> As to the Buddhas within the niches, the one featured on the southern face has been identified as Mahavairocana who can be recognised by the elaborate crown and decorative mandorla behind the seated figure.<sup>701</sup> The Buddhas on the remaining seven faces of the pagoda all have the same appearance and therefore Yu Haiyan suggests that they likely represent the Seven Healing Buddhas.<sup>702</sup>

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<sup>697</sup> Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.390.

<sup>698</sup> The meaning and function of these carvings has been explored in detail in Kim, “Virtual Pilgrimage and Virtual Geography: Power of Liao Miniature Pagodas (907-1125).”

<sup>699</sup> 于海燕, *Chifeng's Ancient Buddhist Pagodas* (赤峰古代佛塔). p.27.

<sup>700</sup> Yu Haiyan. p.27.

<sup>701</sup> Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.391.

<sup>702</sup> 七佛藥師, see: Yu Haiyan, *Chifeng's Ancient Buddhist Pagodas*. p.28.

As stated previously, this sculptural layout appears on a wide range of Liao pagodas albeit with some modifications (it is not limited to any single pagoda style within the new Liao pagoda typology that appears later this section). Modifications to the iconographic set up found at the Daming Pagoda seem to be enforced mainly by the shape and scale of the pagoda in question. For example, the square based pagodas such as the Chaoyang North Pagoda have had to reduce the number of Buddhas to four and have removed the Heavenly Guardians. The dharani pillars have also been moved to each side of the cardinal faces (see Fig. 3.8). There are also many narrower octagonal pagodas that remove the carvings of the dharani pillars from the corners but keep the same images on each of the faces, an example of this would be the pair of pagodas at Chongxingsi in Beizhen (see Fig.3.9).

The origin of the design of these Liao exterior sculptures is often attributed to the Chaoyang North Pagoda – a pagoda with a complex history of rebuilds and restorations. The current structure at the site is normally classified as a Liao pagoda but versions of the structure are believed to date back to at least as early as the Northern Wei (386-534). Despite nominally being classified as a Liao pagoda, the majority of the current structure probably dates to the Tang dynasty with only the exterior superstructure before the first eave being added by the Liao.<sup>703</sup> The HEAP Database supports this conclusion, finding four separate examples of Tang pagodas across Shaanxi and Henan that stylistically match the Chaoyang North Pagoda if the first-level superstructure were to be removed. These are the Chaohua Pagoda, Heyang Shoushengsi Pagoda, Heyang Daxiangsi Pagoda, Yangxian Kaimingsi Pagoda. There is also the possibility that there were other Tang pagodas made in this style that do not remain extant.

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<sup>703</sup> For the addition of the a Liao superstructure, see: Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.393. and Kim, “Eternal Ritual in an Infinite Cosmos: The Chaoyang North Pagoda (1043-1044).” p.4.

Despite their similarities to the Chaoyang North Pagoda, all of these examples have no exterior relief sculpture, suggesting that the design described above is a Liao innovation. However, Steinhardt's conclusion that Chaoyang North represents a 'transitional' style between Tang and Liao designs is more difficult to ascertain.<sup>704</sup> The Chaoyang North Pagoda is one of the earliest Liao pagodas to have a confirmed date in the HEAP Database. It was, therefore, likely among the first pagodas to be completed with this style of relief carving (the potential importance of Chaoyang to later Liao pagoda designs is a point we will return to late in this Chapter).<sup>705</sup> Either way, this Liao design in relief sculpture does not feature in any other pagoda in the HEAP Database prior to the Liao period.

### **3.1.3. Towards a typology of Liao pagoda styles:**

Developing the ideas of Sekino and Takeshima, as well as Soper himself, in 1997 Steinhardt proposed that there were three other distinct Liao pagoda designs other than the archetypal Liao pagoda style described by Soper.<sup>706</sup> She lists these styles as being represented by the Qingzhou White Pagoda (Fig. 3.10), Chaoyang North Pagoda (Fig. 3.11), and the Jixian White Pagoda (Fig. 3.12).<sup>707</sup>

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<sup>704</sup> Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.393.

<sup>705</sup> Although it is worth noting here that almost two thirds of the extant Liao pagodas recorded in the HEAP Database do not have a confirmed date making any definitive statement on the matter challenging.

<sup>706</sup> It must be noted here that Steinhardt did not set out with the purpose of creating a practical typology for Liao pagodas, just that she listed four distinct styles in her discussion of pagodas in: Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. Chapter 3. pp.383-497.

<sup>707</sup> Steinhardt. p.389.

The features that Steinhardt suggests represent the Qingzhou White Pagoda style are: a brick built pagoda with a multi-storey interior space, with an octagonal shape, seven eaves, *dougong* brackets, and exterior relief sculpture.<sup>708</sup> With these parameters in place, the HEAP Database yields just three examples: the Zhuozhou North Pagoda, the Wanbu Huayanjing Pagoda, and the Qingzhou White Pagoda itself. If we remove the requirement of having seven eaves, then all of the remaining *louge*, or ‘tower’ style, Liao pagodas could fit under this classification as the remaining three examples (the Zhuozhou South Pagoda, Liangxiang Pagoda and the Bading Xingwen Pagoda) each contain the rest of the required feature set but possess only five eaves. It is these six *louge*, or ‘tower’ style, pagodas that also most clearly use brick to ape the timber design witnessed at the Yingxian Fogongsi Pagoda, both in terms of structural features and in form.<sup>709</sup> The majority of the Liao ‘tower’ style pagodas are more squat in appearance than the equivalent ‘monument’ style examples, covering a much greater surface area relative to their height, although never quite reaching the proportions witnessed at Fogongsi (see Fig. 3.13).

The third of Steinhardt’s four types of Liao pagoda is represented by the Chaoyang North Pagoda, which she describes as being built in brick and possessing a square plan, thirteen eaves and exterior relief sculpture.<sup>710</sup> There are five pagodas in the database that possess these qualities: the Chaoyang North Pagoda, Chaoyang South Pagoda, Yunjiesi Pagoda, Dabao Pagoda and the Qingfeng Pagoda. All but one of these examples – the Qingfeng Pagoda - were identified by Sekino and Takeshima in their original survey and covered in

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<sup>708</sup> Steinhardt’s original definitions have been paraphrased to fit the HEAP Database filters, for the original description see: Steinhardt. p.391.

<sup>709</sup> Wang Shaozhou singles out the Wanbu Huayanjing Pagoda in Inner Mongolia as being the prime example of this trend: Wang Shaozhou, *Chinese Vernacular Architecture Vol.3*. p.330.

<sup>710</sup> Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.392.

Steinhardt's text.<sup>711</sup> It is interesting to note that these five pagodas are the only four-sided Liao pagodas in the database, making the correlation of the other features identified by Steinhardt evidence of this being a distinct regional pagoda type or style as the author suggests.

Steinhardt's final Liao pagoda type is represented by the Jixian White Pagoda in Tianjin. She lists the characteristics of this type as a brick construction with an octagonal shaft, surmounted by a stupa-style round top section. In Sekino and Takeshima's survey, the Jixian Pagoda was the only example that fits this description, but the current database yields six Liao pagodas that match Steinhardt's prerequisites. Aside from the Jixian Pagoda there is also the Fangshan Yunjusi Pagoda, Banji Pagoda, Chezhoushan Pagoda, Wanfotang Pagoda, and the Qinghuasi Pagoda. Despite their similarities though, I would argue that this group represents two distinct pagoda types. Whereas the round upper section of the Jixian Pagoda takes on a shape reminiscent of the stupa-style pagodas of the Yuan dynasty, this feature is only shared with the Fangshan Yunjusi Pagoda. The other five pagodas share a design that is most commonly referred to as a *huata* (花塔), or 'flower pagoda' due to their similarity to an unopen lotus flower (See Fig: 3.14).<sup>712</sup> In addition, in each of the four surviving examples, the exterior of this lotus bud design is also covered in relief sculpture featuring many levels of small pavilions.

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<sup>711</sup> Steinhardt. p.392. For the original images see plates 7-10 in: Sekino and Takeshima, *Liao-Jin Architecture and Its Buddhist Sculpture*.

<sup>712</sup> See Liang Sicheng's description of the Jin dynasty Guanghui Flower Pagoda: Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.268.

Liang Sicheng has previously suggested that the round upper section of the Jixian White Pagoda may have been a later Yuan addition to the pre-existing Liao structure. Given that the only other example of this pagoda type, the Yunjusi Pagoda was extensively remodelled in the Ming, along with the lack of any other similar Liao examples found in the database, this remains a probable hypothesis.<sup>713</sup> It could therefore be argued that the Jixian White Pagoda represents an anomaly within the Liao pagoda assemblage rather than a deliberate style in and of itself. A Liao date for the complete structure of the Jixian White Pagoda, including its stupa shaped finial, could potentially be supported by one other pagoda in the HEAP Database. Although it postdates the Liao period, the Hongxingcun Hongfo Pagoda was constructed by the Liao's contemporaries, the Western Xia and possesses not only a similar stupa style construction at the top, but also a similar overall holistic design with the two Liao examples.

Unfortunately, Steinhardt's typology does not cover all of the Liao pagodas listed in the HEAP Database. Only thirty of the seventy-seven Liao pagodas are included within the four types of Liao pagoda that Steinhardt identified – less than 40%. An alternative typology of just the Liao brick pagodas was produced by Chen Bochao and Zhao Bingbing in 2012 which comprises 'octagonal', 'hexagonal', 'square', 'tower' (楼阁) and 'flower' styles but this does not cover those Liao pagodas that were produced in timber or stone.<sup>714</sup> Despite this, Chen and Zhao's typology covers seventy-five of the seventy-seven Liao pagodas listed in the HEAP Database and forms the basis of the new typology presented here.

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<sup>713</sup> Liang Sicheng. p.268.

<sup>714</sup> Zhao Bingbing and Chen Bochao, "The Development and Characters of Brick Masonry Towers in Liao Dynasty." p.147.

### 3.1.4. A new typology of Liao pagoda styles:<sup>715</sup>

In creating a new typology for Liao pagodas, it is first important to consider which variables in the HEAP Database should be used to constitute the different stylistic categories. The traditional archaeological approach to stylistic classification of material objects, as presented by Renfrew and Bahn, relies on three different levels of attributes: these progress from a base layer consisting of ‘technological’ attributes such as raw materials, through to ‘shape’ attributes such as dimensions and shape itself, and finally through to ‘surface’ attributes such as decoration and colour.<sup>716</sup>

In our typology of Liao pagodas then, it is pragmatic to first classify them according to their ‘technological attributes’, in this case the primary construction materials of brick, stone (masonry) and wood (timber). These can then be further divided (where relevant) by their ‘shape attributes’, which in this case are represented by the shape of the buildings’ ground-plans (square, hexagonal or octagonal), the presence of interior space (and multiple storeys therein), the shape of the pagoda’s base and finial, and finally, by the number and density of the eaves (it could be argued that the number of eaves could also be classified as a ‘surface’ level attribute in the case of pagodas that do not have multiple interior storeys and therefore the other ‘shape’ attributes should be prioritised over this). Only once these two levels of ‘technological’ and ‘shape’ attributes have been considered should we look for significant

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<sup>715</sup> Please note that I use ‘typology’ here purely as a differentiation of the different styles of Liao pagodas rather than any suggestion of a chronological development of different pagoda types in the Liao, see: Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods, and Practice*, 6th ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2012). pp.124-125.

<sup>716</sup> Renfrew and Bahn. p.119.



differences in the ‘surface attributes’ or exterior decoration of the pagodas such as *dougong*, corbelling, exterior sculpture, and other distinctive decorative features.<sup>717</sup>

Starting with the construction materials then, the HEAP Database contains just one example each of a Liao pagoda constructed in either wood or stone. As such these two individual pagodas will receive their own classification in the typology but need no further division based on either their ‘shape’ or ‘surface’ attributes. It is the seventy-five remaining brick pagodas that provide the greater challenge in terms of categorisation.

As we have witnessed, the archetypal brick-built Liao pagoda style previously identified by Soper, Steinhardt, Liu Dunzhen and Zhang Yuhuan has been borne out by the larger assemblage available in the HEAP Database. In terms of its shape attributes then, the ideal Liao brick pagoda should be an octagonal building with no interior space. It should have an extended base with additional base elements and not be ‘stupa shaped’. Finally, it should have thirteen dense eaves. The most common variations to this ideal model are a different shaped ground plan or a different number of eaves. I will follow the example of Chen and Zhou here by prioritising the shape of the ground plan for classification purposes, subdividing the Liao brick pagodas into those with square, hexagonal and octagonal designs (Examples of square and octagonal brick pagodas have already been demonstrated in Figs. 3.11 and 3.2. For an example of a hexagonal Liao pagoda, see the image of the Shangjing North Pagoda in Fig. 3.15).<sup>718</sup>

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<sup>717</sup> *Dougong* are listed as a surface attribute here as the majority of the Liao pagodas are constructed in brick and, therefore, the *dougong* serve no structural function.

<sup>718</sup> Steinhardt has previously suggested that there are no extant hexagonal Liao pagodas, which is perhaps why she did not include this as a separate classification, see: Nancy Steinhardt, “The Pagoda in Khelen-Bars: New

As witnessed above, Steinhardt's second pagoda type based on the Qingzhou White Pagoda remains a useful distinction as it features a multi-storied interior space. These can therefore be separated from the archetypal octagonal pagodas with a solid core. I would, however, broaden her classification to include all of the *louge*, or 'tower' style, Liao pagodas rather than separate them based on the number of eaves. Steinhardt's third pagoda type, represented by the Chaoyang North Pagoda, is already covered by the divisions based on the ground plan mentioned above. The final one of Steinhardt's Liao pagoda styles, represented by the Jixian White Pagoda, is also worth dividing from the other octagonal brick pagodas due to the addition of its stupa-style finial.

Following the example of Chen and Zhao though, the only addition to this typology that is based on 'surface' attributes, is the separation of the 'flower' pagoda style represented by the Qinghuasi Flower Pagoda from that represented by the Jixian White Pagoda. Although it is not picked up by any of the variables in the HEAP Database this pagoda style is sufficiently differentiated in terms of its external appearance to warrant its own classification.<sup>719</sup>

A new typology of Liao pagodas, based on the previous scholarship on the subject along with the additional data provided by the HEAP Database, would be split into eight distinct styles (organised by the number of extant examples):

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Understandings of Khitan-Period Towering Pagodas," *Archives of Asian Art* 66, no. 2 (2016): 187–212. pp.203–204.

<sup>719</sup> The majority of Chinese literature on pagoda typologies considers the 'Flower' pagoda to be a distinct style. For more on this classification, see the 'Flower Pagoda' section in Chapter 2.

1. The ‘Liao Archetypal Style’: brick, monument, octagonal – forty-nine examples.
2. The ‘Hexagonal Style’: brick, monument, hexagonal – nine examples.
3. The ‘Tower Style’: brick, tower, octagonal – six examples.
4. The ‘Square Style’, brick, monument, square – five examples.
5. The ‘Flower Style’: brick, monument style, octagonal, lotus flower design – four examples.
6. The ‘Stupa Finial Style’: brick, monument style, stupa shape – two examples.
7. The ‘Timber Frame Style’: represented by the Yingxian Pagoda, the only example featured in the HEAP Database.
8. The ‘Stone Style’: represented by the Huaishudong Pagoda, the only example featured in the HEAP Database.<sup>720</sup>

### **3.1.5. Exploring the distinctiveness and distribution of different Liao pagoda styles using the HEAP Database:**

Having identified eight distinct types of Liao pagodas among the seventy-seven surviving examples, the HEAP Database can now help to assess how unique each of these designs are within the wider database, as well as any correlation between pagoda type and geographical location. We have already carried this out for the ‘Liao Archetypal Style’ and will therefore start with the next most common pagoda type, the ‘Hexagonal Style’.

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<sup>720</sup> The typology presented here is perhaps closest to that of Zhao Bingbing and Chen Bochao who divide Liao pagodas into five types: ‘octagonal’, ‘hexagonal’, ‘square’, ‘tower’ (楼阁) and ‘flower’ (花), see: Zhao Bingbing and Chen Bochao, “The Development and Characters of Brick Masonry Towers in Liao Dynasty.”

As recently as 2016, Steinhardt had claimed that there are no known extant hexagonal monumental Liao pagodas, but the HEAP Database demonstrates that this is not the case, with nine included examples. Although the average height of the ‘Hexagonal Style’ Liao pagodas - at 15.3 metres - is significantly below the overall Liao average of 28.7 metres, it would still be difficult to argue that these do not qualify as monumental buildings. The tallest example, the Dongpingfang Pagoda, stands at approximately twenty-four metres tall. The extent of the distribution of the nine pagodas in the HEAP Database that comprise the ‘Hexagonal Type’ can be seen in Fig. 3.16 as a blue line. As we can see, these pagodas are not geographically limited within the Liao polity, appearing in all five administrative circuits, although there are no hexagonal pagodas in the north-east – an area dominated exclusively by octagonal designs in the ‘Liao Archetypal Style’.

The red line on the same map (Fig. 3.16), shows the distribution of non-Liao hexagonal pagodas. There is clear crossover between both the red and blue lines suggesting that the basic features of the Liao’s ‘Hexagonal Style’ do not represent any form of innovation on the part of the Liao, but instead appeared throughout China. When we take the date of these structures into account though - of those pagodas that could have been constructed prior to the first Liao ‘Hexagonal Style’ pagoda, none of them appear in regions that were held by the Liao (see Fig. 3.17). This means that, provided the pagodas in the HEAP Database are a representative sample, the Liao were the first polity to build hexagonal pagodas of this style in the regions that they claimed control over.

Unfortunately, what would have been perhaps the most impressive Liao example of this ‘Hexagonal Style’, located in the northern circuit, is no longer extant and therefore does not

feature in the HEAP Database. Excavations within the city walls of Liao Shangjing published in 2013 show the foundations for a large-scale hexagonal pagoda flanked by two smaller hexagonal satellite pagodas (Fig. 3.18).<sup>721</sup> This discovery, along with the hexagonal Shangjing North Pagoda, suggest that there may have been a preference for pagodas with six sides in and around the Liao's northern capital. This preference is potentially supported by the fact that there are limited numbers of pagodas of the 'Liao Archetypal Style' in the Shangjing area and the Northern Circuit more generally.<sup>722</sup> The only other area where the 'Hexagonal Style' might be considered a trend within the Liao polity, is around present day Anshan Prefecture in what would have been the Liao Eastern Circuit. There are three surviving hexagonal Liao pagodas in the area but also, an equal number of octagonal examples.

The 'Tower Style' Liao pagodas are more limited in their distribution, appearing only in the south and west of the Liao territory and never making it even as far east as Zhongjing, the central capital (see Fig. 3.19).<sup>723</sup> Due to the predominance of the *louge*, or 'tower' style, pagoda in the Tang, it is this style of pagodas that is most likely responsible for the frequent identification of Liao pagodas as being based on Tang archetypes. This suggestion of a Tang heritage dates back to the original architectural surveys of Liang Sicheng and the first

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<sup>721</sup> For details of the excavation see: Chen Yongzhi, 陈永志 et al, "The Highly Important Discovery of the Remains of the Buddhist Monastery at Xishanpo in Huangcheng of the Liao Capital Shangjing in Balin Zuoqi, Inner Mongolia (内蒙古巴林左旗遼上京皇城西山坡佛寺遺址考古獲重大發現)," *Kaogu*, no. 1 (2013): 3–6. Image taken from: 陈永志 Chen Yongzhi, *The Major Discoveries in the Past 60 Years from the Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, Inner Mongolia* (Hohhot: Wenwu Chubanshe (文物出版社), 2014).

<sup>722</sup> The closest example being the Shangjing South Pagoda which, although it is octagonal and brick, misses many of the other features typically associated with the Liao archetypal style.

<sup>723</sup> Another interesting potential explanation for this distribution can be found in the naming of one of the Song dynasty 'Tower Style' pagodas built on the other side of the border, the Liaodi Pagoda (料敵塔). The name roughly translates as the 'pagoda for the enemy' and signifies a potential second role for the building as a watchtower. The 'Tower Style' pagodas of the Western and Southern Liao circuits could equally have been built with a secondary military objective (or at least a display of such) in mind. This potential use of Liao pagodas will be explored in the section on 'Visibility' later in this chapter.

publication specifically on the subject of non-timber pagodas by Gustav Ecke (part of Liang Sicheng's team) in 1935.<sup>724</sup> While the Tang certainly constructed octagonal brick pagodas of this type, with many examples in the HEAP Database, this does not preclude the idea of Liao innovation. As with the 'Hexagonal Style' above, if the non-Liao pagodas of this type are filtered to only those that could have been built before the first Liao examples, then we see no pagodas in the HEAP Database in the area of the survey region that was claimed by the Liao (see Fig. 3.20). Once again, this suggests that the Liao were the first polity to produce pagodas of this style in the regions they controlled. What we may be witnessing then, is the spreading of a previously existing pagoda style into Liao territory. It is interesting to note though, that this pagoda type does not spread any further east, with the Central and Eastern Circuits dominated by the 'Liao Archetypal Style'.

The most significant correlation between a particular style of Liao pagoda, and a particular geographical region, is that of the 'Square Style' and the area around present-day Chaoyang.<sup>725</sup> All five examples appear within twenty kilometres of each other around the current city and its surrounding countryside. The significance of this correlation is borne out by the map in Fig. 3.21. which uses the 'Venn Diagram' function to demonstrate that, while the hexagonal and octagonal pagoda ground-plans are distributed across the Liao regions relatively evenly, the square form appears extremely localised by comparison. As noted earlier, the five pagodas within this group also share a huge number of attributes across the

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<sup>724</sup> Ecke highlights the Liangxiang Pagoda and the pair of pagodas in Zhuozhou as evidence of this continued Tang tradition, see: Ecke, "Structural Features of the Stone Built T'ing-Pagoda: A Preliminary Study." and Ecke, "Structural Features of the Stone Built Ting Pagoda, A Preliminary Study - Chapter II: Brick Pagodas in the Liao Style."

<sup>725</sup> This local correlation has also been noted previously by: Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.392 and Zhao Bingbing and Chen Bochao, "The Development and Characters of Brick Masonry Towers in Liao Dynasty." p.146.

board, at the ‘technological’, ‘shape’, and ‘surface’ levels demonstrating a strong degree of regional preference.

One possible explanation for this extreme localisation is that Chaoyang is one of the few areas within the Liao polity where we have evidence of a pre-existing pagoda being re-used by the Liao. Fujiwara Takato has explored why the Liao kept the square shape of the Chaoyang North Pagoda rather than updating it to the more typical Liao octagonal design. He suggests that it may have been a respect for the original structure at the site, believed at the time to date back to the reign of Emperor Wendi of Sui that led to the restoration of the original design rather than being updated to the more common octagonal designs of the Liao period.<sup>726</sup> The reverence for this building could also be a potential reason for other pagodas being created in the same style in the immediate vicinity, although Fujiwara states that he could find no reason why the square pagoda design did not extend beyond this region within the Liao polity.<sup>727</sup> While the HEAP Database cannot answer this question directly, the transition from square to octagonal pagoda designs in the Liao period is a point that we will pick up again in part two of this chapter.

Of all the Liao pagoda styles identified in the typology above, it is the ‘Flower Style’ that perhaps best demonstrates how the methodological issues with previous studies of Chinese architecture have affected our understanding of the position of the Liao polity in East Asian architectural history. Appearing primarily in the Southern Circuit, with just one example

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<sup>726</sup> 藤原崇人 Takato Fujiwara, “The Aspects of Buddhism on Liao-Xi in the 11th Century as Seen through the Relics from the North Pagoda of Chao-Yang (北塔発現文物に見る 11 世紀遼西の仏教的諸相),” *Kansai University Institute of Eastern and Western Studies* (関西大学東西学術研究所紀要) 44 (2011): 191–209. p.191.

<sup>727</sup> Takato Fujiwara. p.198.

found in the Central Circuit, the five Liao flower pagodas are the first of their kind to appear in the HEAP Database. The only other polity to construct pagodas featuring a similar lotus-shaped finial with elaborate carvings was the Jin dynasty which left two surviving examples: the Zhengang Pagoda and the Guanghuisi Pagoda. Of these two, it is only the Zhengang Pagoda which would be classified as part of the Liao ‘Flower Style’ in the new typology of Liao pagodas presented above. This is because the pagoda at Guanghuisi has a five-part ground plan - unique within the HEAP Database - that is often attributed as being an early prototype for the Jingang Baozuo, or ‘Diamond Throne’ style pagodas that became popular in the Yuan and particularly in the Ming.<sup>728</sup> With this pagoda removed, Fig. 3.22 demonstrates that the distribution of these pagodas remains entirely within territory formerly claimed by the Liao.

Despite the strong associations between the Liao and the ‘Flower Style’, this type of pagoda is most commonly attributed as a Song dynasty innovation.<sup>729</sup> This is an inevitable consequence of the traditional way in which certain Chinese language architectural texts have been organised based on a dynastic timeline that favours the Song over the Liao. In this way, the flower pagoda will appear in sections dedicated to the achievements of the *Song period*, without actually being a product of the *Song dynasty*. None of the texts presenting the flower

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<sup>728</sup> As suggested by Liang Sicheng’s typology of Chinese pagodas: Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.268. For more on how the Guanghuasi Pagoda may be an early example of a Jingang Baozuo pagoda, see: Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.50.

<sup>729</sup> For a Song dynasty attribution, see: Xiao Mo, *History of Chinese Architecture*. p.183, Xiao Mo, *Chinese Archit.* p.128, Lou Qingxi, *Twenty Essays on Chinese Architecture* (中國古建築: 二十講). p.135. Zhang Yijie, *Pagodas*. p.88.



pagoda as a Song innovation provide any examples of Song flower pagodas, correlating with the lack of evidence for Song examples of this type provided in the HEAP Database.<sup>730</sup>

It has also been suggested that flower pagodas may have originated in the Tang dynasty but there are no examples that have been recorded from this polity within the HEAP Database.<sup>731</sup>

The fact that these pagodas appear primarily within the Liao Southern Circuit increases the likelihood that these pagodas may have been based on an earlier Tang example that is no longer extant. The similarity of the complex base section between the pagodas of the Liao ‘Flower Style’ and the ‘Liao Archetypal Style’ (compare Fig. 3.2 and Fig. 3.14) however, would suggest that this design is most likely to be a Liao original, or at least to have been adapted by the Liao into its current form.

The ‘Stupa Finial Style’ is more difficult to assess in terms of distribution. Although both of the two examples that feature in the HEAP Database are in the Southern Circuit, without more surviving examples there is not enough evidence to be able to suggest that this is a trend. Compounding this issue is the question of whether the finial at either of these monuments may have been a later addition – making it difficult to state anything practical about the distribution of this style.

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<sup>730</sup> Of course this also depends on what qualifies as a flower pagoda. The character 花 has been taken to mean two different things. Although the general consensus is that it literally refers to the lotus bud shape of the finial, Guo Qinghua’s bilingual dictionary of Chinese architecture translates it in the sense of *huashi* (花饰) or ‘ornamented’. This means that a much wider classification of decorated pagodas could fall under this description, see: Guo, *A Visual Dictionary of Chinese Architecture*. p.43.

<sup>731</sup> Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.79. suggests that the Baidi Stone Pagoda in Shanxi might be an early prototype of the flower design (although its square shape makes this unlikely) and Zhang Yijie, *Pagodas*. p.88. suggests the Longhu Pagoda as a Tang prototype but the lotus finial is a completely different shape in this example. Neither of these pagodas is included in the HEAP Database, but if they were, neither would meet the requirements of the Liao ‘Flower Style’ identified in the typology earlier in this Chapter.

Due to its timber-frame construction, the Fogongsi Pagoda has been granted its own category within this typology. This building material makes the Fogongsi Pagoda an anomaly not just within the Liao data but across all of the pagodas in China featured within the database.<sup>732</sup> It is commonly accepted, that it is only due to the poorer preservation potential of wood, that there are not more surviving timber-frame Liao pagodas (and timber pagodas more generally).<sup>733</sup> Given the frequent imitation of this timber frame style in brick, and particularly the imitation of the carpentry of *dougong* bracket sets which feature on ninety-six percent of all surviving Liao pagodas, it seems probable that timber pagoda construction may have been more prevalent - where resources allowed - within the Liao Empire. However, with just the one surviving example, there is little that can currently be done in terms of distribution analysis.<sup>734</sup>

The only 'Stone Style' Liao pagoda in the HEAP Database is the Huaishudong Pagoda in Liaoning (Fig. 3.23). Despite being the only Liao pagoda of its kind within the dataset, this does not mean that similar examples do not (or did not) exist. Firstly, the poor preservation of the Huaishudong Pagoda suggests that others constructed in the same style may have fared similarly and no longer remain extant. Unlike many of the other Chinese miniature stone pagodas in the database, in which each masonry block makes a single layer of the structure,

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<sup>732</sup> All of the other extant wooden pagodas in the HEAP Database are located in Japan where there are eighteen surviving examples. However, there is surviving written evidence for wooden pagodas in China (and Korea) that no longer remain extant dating back to the first recorded Chinese pagoda at Baimasi which featured in the *Luoyang qielan ji*, see: Wang Yi-t'ung, *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Lo-Yang*.

<sup>733</sup> Nancy Steinhardt, "Liao: An Architectural Tradition in the Making," *Artibus Asiae* 54, no. 1 (1994): 5–39. p.37. Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.267.

<sup>734</sup> More practical analysis for this pagoda could be generated in future from the Architectura Sinica database project: <https://architecturasinica.org/index.html> (accessed 12/11/18), which records the different types of bracket sets at individual buildings within China. The style of carpentry and *dougong* used at Fogongsi could therefore be compared to other timber-framed buildings from different periods in China.

the Huaishudong example has been created using many smaller blocks with outward facing relief carvings leaving it much more susceptible to damage (either through natural means or through spoliation).

Equally, the small stature of the stone pagoda at Huaishudong made it (as well as any similar structures) less likely to have been deemed significant enough to have featured in the provincial and national level of protected sites, compared to the majority of the brick pagodas in the region. Given that the Huaishudong Pagoda was only added to the Liaoning Provincial Protected Site List in its 9<sup>th</sup> edition in 2014, it may be possible that other small stone pagodas such as this will be added in future editions. Also, only the first 2.5 metres of the Huaishudong Pagoda survive, it therefore falls within a scale where it remains a possibility that this monument may, in fact, be the base of a *jingchuang*, or dharani pillar rather than a pagoda, of which there are many surviving Liao examples.<sup>735</sup> As the only ‘Stone Style’ Liao pagoda in the HEAP Database though, there is no prospect of any useful distribution analysis as a part of this study.

### **3.1.6. Initial observations based on the different styles of Liao pagodas:**

Liao pagodas manage to pull off a unique trick in terms of style. There is no other polity within the HEAP Database that produced pagodas covering so many of the different programmed variables. At the same time, however, there are also almost no polities that

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<sup>735</sup> For the definition of a dharani pillar and their differences with pagodas, see Chapter 2. Some examples of Liao dharani pillars and Chuang Style Pagodas along with high resolution images can be found in: 赵佳琛 Zhao Jiachen, *Ancient Pagodas of Fangshan*, 房山古塔 (Beijing: Beijing Lianhe Chubanshe (北京联合出版社), 2015).

constructed pagodas with such uniform holistic design. The Liao were only beaten in the ‘similarity index’ percentage by the Wuyue, Silla and Heian (all of which have left us a significantly smaller assemblage than the Liao). One potential hypothesis for why this might be the case is that the Liao may have constructed pagodas in a variety of styles initially, with a specific archetypal style developing over time. With only twenty-seven of the seventy-seven Liao pagodas in the HEAP Database having a confirmed date though, it is difficult to assess if this was the case. Based on the limited data of these twenty-seven dated examples, there appears to be no correlation between any of the Liao styles and a particular date and there is no obvious progression from any one style to another. One observation that is worth noting however, is that none of the Liao pagodas with a confirmed date began construction prior to 1007 (a figure that we will return to later).

What seems to be more probable from the available data in the HEAP Database is that the unusual combination of homogeneity and variety originates from the construction of highly differentiated pagoda styles in different regions of the Liao polity. The concentration of the ‘Square Style’ around Chaoyang and the bias towards the Southern Circuit for the ‘Flower Style’ being the most prominent examples explored so far. Another way to examine this is to use the ‘Feature Connectivity Map’ function of the HEAP Database on a working list of just the Liao pagodas (see Fig. 3.24). This function can select up to six variables from the HEAP Database and visually demonstrate which of these features each pagoda shares with its nearest five neighbours. The more colours that a line between two pagodas has, the more features they have in common. Fig. 3.24. demonstrates that there appears to have been much more variation in pagoda design in the southern, western and northern administrative circuits, with a far greater level of similarity in the central and eastern circuits where there is a higher concentration of pagodas built in the ‘Liao Archetypal Style’. This could potentially be

indicative of a more organised imperial building strategy with regard to pagoda design in these regions.

Whether they developed over time though, or whether the styles were fully formed before construction of the first Liao pagoda began, the pagodas produced within the Liao polity were built to a limited set of distinct styles. The typology presented here identifies eight major styles of Liao pagoda but did any of these styles represent innovation in pagoda design at the regional level? Any analysis of the originality of pagoda designs carried out with the tools provided by the HEAP Database should first consider the limitations of the HEAP Database project, foremost among which is that the database only represents a sample of historical East Asian pagodas that may have existed from the survey period. There are many known extant pagodas that have not yet made it onto the lists of protected sites used for the database's construction as well as a wealth of data that has been lost through pagodas that have not survived.

With that in mind, if we do take the sample contained within the HEAP Database as representative of a wider whole, then there are some interesting implications from this initial assessment with regard to the regional context of Liao pagoda designs. While some of the styles are hard to assess due to either limited numbers such as the 'Timber Frame Style' and 'Stone Style' or issues with date of construction such as the 'Stupa Finial Style', a clear pattern of innovation and impact emerges from the remaining Liao pagoda styles.

Although the 'Liao Archetypal Style' did not use any features that had not previously appeared elsewhere in East Asia, these features were combined within the Liao polity into

something new and distinctive that was not seen anywhere else in the East Asian region. The exterior sculpture on these monuments also represented a new direction in pagoda ornamentation that had not previously existed prior to the Liao period. The HEAP Database indicates that this distinctly Liao style of pagoda was adopted and continued to be used during the Jin dynasty in the former Liao territories.

Despite often being classified as a Song innovation, all of the evidence presented here suggests that the 'Flower Style' of Liao pagodas is unique compared to anything that came before it. Flower pagodas are recognised throughout the literature on Chinese architecture as a separate pagoda type and the first examples appear to have been constructed within the Liao polity. This is a pagoda style that continued into the Jin and potentially inspired the construction of a whole new style of pagodas in the form of Jingang Baozuo Pagodas.<sup>736</sup>

The 'Liao Archetypal Style' and the 'Flower Style' may provide the clearest signs of innovation in pagoda design within the Liao polity but the 'Hexagonal Style' and 'Tower Style' also represent some interesting developments too. Figs. 3.16-3.20 demonstrate that although these styles were not created solely within the Liao polity, the Liao were the first to construct these pagoda styles in the regions they laid claim to. What these maps also represent is that after the Liao introduced these new pagoda styles, they both continued to be built within these regions after the end of the Liao period.

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<sup>736</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.268.

There will always be questions as to the level of innovation that occurred in pagoda design within the Liao polity, but the HEAP Database strongly suggests that original pagoda designs were created for the first time within this polity and that previously existing designs were spread to areas where they had not been constructed previously. It seems that, in Northeast Asia at least, the Liao had a significant impact on pagoda design. What is worth noting here though, is that these Liao designs do not seem to have spread beyond the Liao borders – something that we will come back to when we explore the potential influences of Liao pagodas in part three of this chapter.

### **3.2. What changes in East Asian pagoda design occurred during the Liao period?**

Another way in which to assess the impact the Liao polity may have had on East Asian pagoda design is to observe any major changes that occurred in the design of pagodas across East Asia during the Liao period. By exploring which HEAP Database features underwent a change during this period we can try to isolate if Liao pagodas played a part in any of these wider changes. The available literature does point to there being some significant changes to pagoda design that occurred during the period 907-1125:

1. A move from square to octagonal ground plans being the dominant form.
2. The increasing popularity of thirteen eaved pagoda designs.
3. Brick taking over from timber as the primary construction material for new pagodas.
4. The adoption of features imitating carpentry in brick – particularly *dougong* brackets.
5. A shift to ‘solid-core’ designs with limited or no interior space.

6. The eaves of the pagoda becoming more densely clustered together – also known as the *miyan* style.
7. The base of the pagoda becoming increasingly complex with the adoption of features such as a lotus base.
8. An increase in average pagoda height.

Each of these changes will be explored with evidence from the HEAP Database below: firstly to ascertain whether or not these changes did occur during the Liao period and, secondly, to ascertain any part Liao pagoda design may have had in these changes.

### **3.2.1. A move from square to octagonal ground plans:**

As early as the first surveys into Chinese architecture in the 1920s, the tenth century had been identified as marking a significant shift in pagoda design. A 1935 essay by Gustav Ecke highlighted this period as being responsible for the shift from pagodas primarily being designed with a square ground plan to those that had been designed with an octagonal ground plan.<sup>737</sup> In later studies, this assessment has become more refined with Liu Dunzhen noting that, although there were isolated examples of eight sided pagodas in the Tang and the Five Dynasties periods, it was not until the Song (starting in 960) that the octagonal ground plan could be considered a trend.<sup>738</sup> While both Liu Dunzhen and Zhang Yuhuan identify the Song

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<sup>737</sup> Ecke, “Structural Features of the Stone Built T’ing-Pagoda: A Preliminary Study.” p.254.

<sup>738</sup> Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.223.



as the main instigators of this change, they both also make reference to the Liao as potentially playing a role in this important transition.<sup>739</sup>

Steinhardt takes the Liao role a step further, stating that it is the Liao that can be credited with popularising the octagonal design over the square ground plans more commonly witnessed in the Tang.<sup>740</sup> As we have already witnessed in the previous section, the octagonal form is by far the most common design of Liao pagoda, making up 82% of the entire corpus within the HEAP Database. While there may be a case for the Liao to have helped popularise the octagonal design, they were certainly not the first East Asian polity to design a pagoda with an octagonal ground plan.

The origin of the octagonal pagoda in East Asia is difficult to ascertain with any degree of certainty. The Five Dynasties period is often referred to as the period in which the design choice began to become popular but it is rare to see a specific date given for the origin of this trend.<sup>741</sup> Liu Dunzhen has previously noted that the pagodas at Zhaofusi and Qingliansi both date to the ninth century and are both designed on an octagonal ground plan that could have been the archetypes for later Liao designs.<sup>742</sup> However, the earliest example of an octagonal pagoda with a confirmed date of construction recorded within the HEAP Database is the

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<sup>739</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas*. p.102. Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.223.

<sup>740</sup> Nancy Steinhardt, "The Tangut Royal Tombs near Yinchuan," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 369–81.

<sup>741</sup> For references to this trend in the Five Dynasties see: Ding Yuan, *Chinese Archit.* p.137. Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas*. p.86.

<sup>742</sup> Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.224.

Xingping North Pagoda in Xianyang, Shaanxi Province built in 627.<sup>743</sup> This may still not be the earliest octagonal pagoda to have been built in East Asia though.

Evidence that earlier eight sided pagodas may have been built prior to this period come in the form of miniature model pagodas dating to the Northern Liang (397-460CE). These models appear to be most frequently designed to have either a circular or eight-sided shape and it has previously been suggested that they might have been the inspiration for some of the earliest brick pagodas constructed in China such as the pagoda at Songyuesi.<sup>744</sup> The Songyuesi Pagoda also provides another potential example of an octagonal ground plan as, although the building has a dodecagonal exterior (and is thus noted in the HEAP Database as having a twelve sided construction), the interior of the building has an octagonal design.<sup>745</sup>

Archaeological evidence at Cheong'am-ri temple site in Pyongyang suggests that octagonal pagodas may have existed in the Korean peninsula from as early as the fifth century.<sup>746</sup>

Despite the early isolated examples of octagonal pagodas that are still available to us, as well as the potential for there being even earlier non-extant examples, the HEAP Database largely confirms that the trend for eight-sided construction does not begin until the tenth century. The scatter chart and trend line in Fig. 3.25 demonstrate that the key period for the adoption of the

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<sup>743</sup> Although it should be noted that this pagoda was restored in 1782 during the Qing dynasty which could have resulted in some design change. It remains unlikely that the building was completely reconstructed with an entirely new shape.

<sup>744</sup> Wang, "What Do Trigrams Have to Do with Buddhas? The Northern Liang Stupas as a Hybrid Spatial Model." p.71. Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*. p.206.

<sup>745</sup> I was surprised to note this on my first visit to the structure in 2014 – having a different shaped interior and exterior ground plan seems to be a feature unique to this specific pagoda, with no other example of this phenomenon found within the HEAP Database.

<sup>746</sup> Dai Whan An, "The circumambulation corridor as the ritual space: Buddhist pagodas of Goguryeo in Korea and Southern and Northern Dynasties in China during the 5th–6th century" in *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering* (2019)

octagonal ground plan over the square ground plan occurs between the years 900 and 1050. The widespread adoption of this new design therefore does occur within the Liao period. While four-sided pagodas make up seventy-six percent of all pagodas constructed prior to 907, eight and six-sided examples make up just sixteen and four percent respectively.<sup>747</sup> Of those pagodas constructed during the Liao period, however, some sixty-one percent have eight sides, twenty-four percent have six sides, and just fifteen percent have four sides. We must therefore note that it is not just the octagonal pagoda that increases in popularity during this period but also the number of hexagonal examples rises significantly over pre-tenth century levels.

Potential reasons why octagonal (and to an extent, hexagonal) pagodas became a trend during the Liao period will be covered below. First though, it is important to utilise the HEAP Database to observe what role the Liao may have played in the popularisation of these forms during this period. An initial survey can be done using the ‘spread over time’ function filtered for just those pagodas that have both a confirmed date and an octagonal ground-plan (Fig. 3.26). By filtering the database to just those pagodas with eight sides, we can demonstrate the nearest earlier examples that could potentially have influenced Liao designs as well as any nearby later pagodas that may have been influenced by the Liao transition to eight sides.

Fig. 3.26 demonstrates that the nearest earlier pagoda to have eight sides to any Liao pagodas is the Zhipingsi Stone Pagoda that was constructed in the mid-eighth century under the Tang. However, this pagoda exists outside of territory claimed by the Liao, thus suggesting that the

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<sup>747</sup> The rest of those pagodas constructed during this period are comprised of either round or dodecagonal examples.

Liao were the first to build octagonal pagodas in the areas that they came to occupy. This same map also suggests that Liao pagodas may have possibly influenced local Jin and Ming dynasty pagodas into adopting an eight-sided design. The Liao pagodas are indicated by a light blue circle with arrows pointing towards the orange and yellow circles which indicate the Jin and Ming pagodas. However, this map only explores potential local connections whereas it may be more beneficial to explore the Liao pagodas within the wider region.

Figs. 3.27-3.33 use the 'Single Feature' function to observe how the trends for the shape of pagoda ground plans changes across the East Asia region over time. Starting with Fig. 3.27: this map uses the 'single feature' function of the HEAP Database to display all of the pagodas included within the database and to make a link using a coloured line to show if they share the same number of sides (please note that the same colour key of a red line for square designs, a green line for hexagonal designs and a blue line for octagonal designs is repeated for Figs. 3.27-3.33). It becomes apparent from this image that there are localised trends with regard to pagoda ground plan across the survey region that the HEAP Database covers. Of particular note is the predominance of square designs in both the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago, as well as the domination of the hexagonal form in much of what is now the south and south east of China. Octagonal pagodas prove to be the predominant design in much of what is now northern and central China but to see when this trend began, we have to filter the database to view what the picture was like at different points in the timeline.

When we consider just those pagodas with a confirmed construction date prior to the year 750, we can see that, although there are some isolated examples of pagodas that do not have a

square ground plan (those without any red connecting lines), the only trends we see at a local level are for pagodas with a square design. By the beginning of the Liao dynasty in 907, however, the picture had changed a little with small pockets of pagodas in central and southern China adopting the octagonal design.<sup>748</sup> By the time of the construction of the first Liao pagodas in 1007, as seen in Fig. 3.30, the main area where the octagonal form had risen to dominance is in the east of China centred around present day Shanghai and the provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang. This is an area that would have been claimed by the Kingdom of Wuyue in the period 907-978 during which these pagodas were constructed. There is a possibility that this lends some credence to the suggestion we encountered earlier that the Qixiasi Pagoda, also built by the Southern Tang, may have been an inspiration for Liao pagoda designs.<sup>749</sup>

Even by 1007, the nearest grouping of octagonal pagodas to territory claimed by the Liao is in Henan Province situated around the area of the Northern Song's imperial capital of Kaifeng. It is also in this period that we see the first groups of hexagonal pagodas emerge – one group in the South East of China and another – again - near to Northern Song Kaifeng. What each of these maps illustrate more than anything, however, is the continued dominance of the square ground plan in pagoda design prior to the construction of the first Liao pagodas. It certainly could not be suggested that the octagonal form in pagoda design had become the norm in East Asia in the way that it would become during the Liao period.

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<sup>748</sup> Note that the yellow line in this figure indicates pagodas with a circular ground plan.

<sup>749</sup> See: Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.227.

Fig. 3.31 serves to demonstrate just how much the situation had changed by the fall of the Liao dynasty in 1125. Although there are areas where the square plan still dominated – notably in western China, the Korean Peninsula and Japan (as well as parts of Shaanxi and Hebei), much of what is now China had adopted either octagonal or hexagonal designs. There is also a north-south divide either side of the Yangzi - with pagodas to the north favouring the octagonal design and hexagonal designs witnessed more frequently in the south. Considering just those pagodas produced within the Liao period of 907-1125, as seen in Fig. 3.32, this sense of regionality becomes more pronounced as we see that the earlier trend for square pagodas around Hebei and Shaanxi did not continue into this later period. It also becomes apparent the degree to which the octagonal design came to dominate the Liao territory in particular.

Fig. 3.33 shows only those pagodas in the HEAP Database that were constructed after the end of the Liao period and, as we can see, the octagonal pagoda continues to be the most common form across the region as a whole. What is of note here though, is that the octagonal design also begins to appear in new regions in this period, spreading both west and east of where they were found during the Liao era. In terms of the potential influence that Liao pagoda designs may have had on future construction, we see that not only does the former Liao territory remain the almost exclusive domain of eight-sided designs but also that eight-sided construction becomes a trend in the north of the Korean peninsula for the first time. While it cannot be proved that this change was inspired by Liao pagoda design, the proximity of these pagodas to the former Liao territory and the fact that this trend only occurs in the north of the Korean peninsula make this the most likely hypothesis. The Liao had been active in this region since the conquest of Balhae in 926 and the close ties between Liao and Goryeo have already been well established as we explored in Chapter 1.

Fig. 3.34 also serves to highlight the importance of the Liao period to the spread of the octagonal pagoda by mapping the geographic extent of octagonal designs across the East Asia region at different points in history. Prior to the first confirmed construction date of a Liao pagoda in 1007, octagonal pagoda designs had been almost exclusively limited to southern and eastern China. This map clearly demonstrates that the Liao played a significant role in the expansion of this form and also suggests that the role they played may have helped to encourage the further expansion of octagonal pagoda designs that occurred after the Liao dynasty officially came to an end in 1125.

The Liao territory was clearly dominated by the octagonal ground plan, as we might have expected from our exploration of typical Liao pagoda features earlier in this chapter. From this data, it seems that the Liao pagodas were part of a trend towards octagonal designs across the whole of what is now China that began in the tenth century in the Kingdom of Wuyue and the Northern Song but did not reach its climax until the eleventh century after the Liao had begun their own programme of pagoda construction. From this evidence, it seems likely that, although the Liao probably cannot be credited with popularising the octagonal design in China as Steinhardt has previously suggested, the dynasty can be credited with popularising this pagoda shape in the regions they occupied and, also, to have at least been a major contributor to the popularity of this pagoda style overall.

The question that still remains though, is why the Liao so enthusiastically adopted the octagonal ground-plan for their pagodas? As the following quote serves to demonstrate, this can be an interesting question to explore:

On the other hand, it was certainly a fascinating building. Its builders had been obsessed with the number eight. The floor was a continuous mosaic of eight-sided tiles, the corridor walls and ceilings were angled to give the corridors eight sides if the walls and ceilings were counted and, in those places where part of the masonry had fallen in, even the stones themselves had eight sides. Eight is a number of some considerable occult significance on the disc and must never, ever, be spoken by a wizard.

Terry Pratchett: *The Colour of Magic*<sup>750</sup>

While Terry Pratchett's fictional (and fantastical) Discworld, unsurprisingly, has little to do with pagodas, the Liao dynasty, or East Asia in general, it does serve to highlight the ubiquity with which the number eight has been associated with the magical and the religious.

Examples of this phenomenon are easily found: from the adoption of an octagonal shape that came to dominate the design of baptistries in Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean, to the associations that the number has with good fortune in China today.<sup>751</sup> We therefore need to be very careful in assigning a specific reason as to why the Liao might have chosen to adopt the

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<sup>750</sup> Pratchett, T. *The Colour of Magic* (London: Colin Smythe, 1983).

<sup>751</sup> For more on the spread of octagonal baptistries, see: Olaf Brandt, "The Lateran Baptistery and the Diffusion of Octagonal Baptistries from Rome to Constantinople," in *Frühes Christentum Zwischen Rom Und Konstantinopel: Acta Congressus Internationalis XIV Archaeologiae Christianae*, ed. Reinhardt Harreither (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2006), 221–27.



octagonal form. This is, after all, one of the main sticking points that instigated the debate between Kuhn and Steinhardt about Liao architecture that we explored in Chapter 2.<sup>752</sup>

There is a variety of potential reasons why the Liao might have considered building pagodas with an octagonal ground plan. Firstly, there is Steinhardt's assertion that the number eight had great significance in traditional pre-dynastic Kitan cosmology and ritual.<sup>753</sup> Of particular note being that the Kitan origin myth features an account of the Kitan people being divided into eight tribes.<sup>754</sup> While the Kitan associations with the number eight are well documented, Kuhn has suggested that the eight-sided pagodas of the Liao were much more likely to have been based on a Chinese precedent for eight-sided construction. Kuhn cites the existence of prior octagonal pagodas in Zhejiang and Jiangsu as evidence of this and links the octagonal shape to traditional Chinese culture and in particular the *Bagua* of Daoist cosmology.<sup>755</sup>

The link to Daoism is an interesting one given the competition between Daoism and Buddhism that had existed since Buddhism entered China in the third century BCE. However, eight-sided pagodas in China have been linked to Daoism from the earliest known examples. In a paper on the miniature model pagodas dating to the Northern Liang that we mentioned earlier in this chapter, Wang has noted that many of the surviving eight sided examples of these miniatures feature the eight trigrams of the *Bagua* carved onto their

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<sup>752</sup> See: Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*., Kuhn, "'Liao Architecture': Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?" and Steinhardt, "A Response to Dieter Kuhn, 'Liao Architecture: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?'"

<sup>753</sup> Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.56.

<sup>754</sup> For more on pre-dynastic Kitan ritual and the importance of the number eight see: Xu, "Historical Development of the Pre-Dynastic Khitan." Chapter 3: pp.83-102.

<sup>755</sup> Kuhn, "'Liao Architecture': Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?" p.350.

exterior.<sup>756</sup> Wang suggests that this may have been to help try and domesticate the outside religion of Buddhism within a pre-existing indigenous cosmological framework to make it more accessible.<sup>757</sup> While this may have been the case originally, it appears that the use of trigrams on the exterior of pagodas continued long after the Northern Liang period and, while none of the Liao pagodas that were included in the photographic survey that we carried out in 2015 featured this decorative motif, the White Pagoda built under the Jin dynasty in Liaoyang does (see Fig. 3.35). The fact that this pagoda adheres rigidly to the ‘Liao Archetypal Style’ that we established earlier in this chapter suggests that the Eight Trigrams could also have appeared on previous Liao pagodas as well.<sup>758</sup>

One potential reason for the adoption of an octagonal design by the Liao is agreed upon by both Kuhn and Steinhardt – that the design may have been borrowed from the former occupants of much of North East China and the north of the Korean peninsula - the Kingdom of Balhae. This polity was annexed by the Liao in 926 and both authors suggest that octagonal ground-plans, as well as other elements of pagoda design, may have entered the Liao corpus as the people of this region were integrated into the wider Liao population.<sup>759</sup> The evidence in the HEAP Database to support or deny this hypothesis is extremely limited as there is only one remaining extant Balhae pagoda – the Lingguang Pagoda on the current China-North Korean border. This pagoda features a square ground plan and, although it is just a single example, archaeological work at other Balhae sites at Madina and Kraskino have

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<sup>756</sup> Wang, “What Do Trigrams Have to Do with Buddhas? The Northern Liang Stupas as a Hybrid Spatial Model.” p.71.

<sup>757</sup> Wang. p.90.

<sup>758</sup> The photographic survey of Liao pagodas I carried out as part of the ‘Understanding Cities’ project only covered twenty-seven of the extant Liao pagodas so there is a possibility that other Liao pagodas within the HEAP Database may already feature the *bagua* on the exterior.

<sup>759</sup> Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.370. and Kuhn, “‘Liao Architecture’: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?” p.348.

revealed square foundations for pagodas that are no longer extant.<sup>760</sup> It is therefore unlikely that the Liao adoption of the octagonal pagoda originates from this region.

As established during the analysis of the ‘single feature’ maps, there were other areas in East Asia that had already begun to move towards eight-sided construction in the tenth century that the Liao may have drawn influence from. As we witnessed in Chapter 1, the Liao had close political ties with the Kingdom of Wuyue with embassies recorded as arriving from this polity in the *Liaoshi* on six separate occasions before the Wuyue were incorporated into the Song in 978.<sup>761</sup> It is possible that new Buddhist ideas and teachings may have arrived with these delegations, especially given the importance of the Buddhist religion to the Kings of Wuyue. One pagoda related example of this devotion can be found in Qian Hongchu, the final King of Wuyue (948-978), who is believed to have ordered the creation of 8,400 miniature *baogie* pagodas in an attempt to emulate the achievements of the third century BCE Buddhist ruler King Ashoka (who reportedly built 84,000 stupas).<sup>762</sup>

Equally, the presence of eight sided pagodas near to the Northern Song capital of Kaifeng would almost certainly have been witnessed by the diplomatic envoys regularly sent by the Liao after the peace was brokered between these two dynasties in 1005. It is not inconceivable that part of the reason for the adoption of octagonal pagodas may have been to directly compete with these early Northern Song examples that start to appear in the second

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<sup>760</sup> For the Madida site report see: Zhang Xiying, “Excavation Briefing for the Huichun Madida Pagoda Foundation (琿春马滴达渤海塔基清理简报).” The Kraskino reports for the 2010 excavation that explored the pagoda foundation are available in both Russian and Korean online through the North East Asian History Network: [http://contents.nahf.or.kr/item/item.do?levelId=kr.d\\_0008](http://contents.nahf.or.kr/item/item.do?levelId=kr.d_0008) (accessed 04/08/17).

<sup>761</sup> Worthy, “Diplomacy for Survival: Domestic and Foreign Relations of Wü Yueh, 907-978.” p.36.

<sup>762</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *Chinese Buddhist Architecture*. p.29.

half of the tenth century. It would not be the first suggestion that pagodas may have been tied into this political rivalry and is a question we will return to when we explore pagoda height later in this chapter (section 3.2.8).<sup>763</sup>

Other potential reasons for the adoption of eight sided pagodas – by the Liao or any other polity – may come from Buddhist cosmology. Soper originally stated that the increased influence of Tantric Buddhism in this period, as well as new ideas entering China from India may have precipitated the move from four to eight-sided ground plans.<sup>764</sup> Snodgrass suggests that all stupas and pagodas were originally conceived of as a wheel with spokes - the significance of each wheel being indicated by the number of spokes or sides of the building. Whereas the four-spoked wheel represented the solar-structured world with its four seasons and four cardinal directions, the eight-spoked wheel represents the eight directions of space as well as the Wheel of the Dharma. The appeal of the image of the Dharma Wheel is easy to see for any potential ruling power as the eight spokes would therefore represent the eightfold path set in motion by the Cakravartin – the benevolent universal ruler of the entire world.<sup>765</sup>

Kim has also explored the significance of the number eight in Buddhist cosmology as it specifically relates to Liao pagodas.<sup>766</sup> As we noted in the previous section, many of the surviving Liao pagodas feature relief carving on the exterior depicting the Eight Great Stupas of the Buddhist tradition. These stupas are believed to be the original reliquaries for the remains of Sakyamuni Buddha and were intended to be positioned at each of the locations of

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<sup>763</sup> See: Jonathan Dugdale, “Pagodas, Patronage and Power” (Newcastle University, 2011). Chapter 3.

<sup>764</sup> Sickman and Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China*. p.240.

<sup>765</sup> Snodgrass, *The Symbolism of the Stupa*. p.82.

<sup>766</sup> Kim, “Virtual Pilgrimage and Virtual Geography: Power of Liao Miniature Pagodas (907-1125).”

the Buddha's eight major life events, thereby charting his life's history. Kim states that by featuring the images of these stupas on the exterior of their pagodas, the Buddhists of the Liao polity could practise a 'virtual pilgrimage' of these monuments (along with the associated merit gained from such a journey) simply by circumambulating the pagoda.<sup>767</sup>

While the historical and cosmological reasons for an eight-sided pagoda design are many, we should also not overlook the potential practical reasons for the switch from square to octagonal ground plans. Xu Huadang has previously mentioned that octagonal pagodas are more resistant to both storms and earthquakes than their square counterparts.<sup>768</sup> While I am in no position to comment on the structural rigidity of different structures based on their shape, there are certainly more surviving octagonal pagodas than square ones recorded in the HEAP Database. The earlier dates of the majority of square pagodas against their octagonal counterparts, however, mean that it is difficult to verify if this is entirely due to the greater potential stability of octagonal construction.

It is extremely difficult to pinpoint any one reason why the Liao might have chosen to adopt the octagonal rather than the square pagoda. What seems most likely is that, rather than any one reason in particular, it was a combination of a few of the factors mentioned above that drove the wholesale adoption of this form.<sup>769</sup> Given the number of potential reasons for constructing a pagoda with eight sides, it is perhaps unsurprising that so many Liao pagodas follow this design. The appeal of a shape with Kitan, Buddhist and Daoist cosmological

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<sup>767</sup> Kim. p.11.

<sup>768</sup> Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. p.39.

<sup>769</sup> Karlsson has previously pointed to the deliberate conflation of multiple narratives as a feature of Buddhist visual culture, see: Karlsson, "The Formation of Early Buddhist Visual Culture." pp.70-71.

significance that was also already becoming popular amongst the Liao's neighbours and rivals in other regions may have been hard to resist.

### **3.2.2. The increasing popularity of thirteen-eaved pagoda designs:**

While we have already noted the widespread adoption of the thirteen-eaved design by the Liao earlier in this chapter (with 44% of all Liao pagodas featuring this number of eaves), it is interesting to note that this phenomenon was not just limited to the pagodas of the Liao polity. Both Liu Dunzhen and Zhang Yuhuan have noted that thirteen-eaved pagodas became prevalent in the Song-Liao period.<sup>770</sup> Steinhardt has attributed this popularity to the Liao, stating that it was this dynasty that originally brought the thirteen-eaved pagoda design to China.<sup>771</sup>

The origins of the thirteen-eaved pagoda remain unclear. Early artworks of pagodas at the Dunhuang and Mogao caves have a maximum of nine eaves, while the miniature pagoda models produced under the Northern Liang have a maximum of seven.<sup>772</sup> There is early evidence of the number thirteen being used in a different architectural context in the *Luoyang qielanji* which records a thirteen-bay Northern Wei Buddhist Hall dating to the fifth century.<sup>773</sup> According to Zhang Yuhuan, the first thirteen-eaved pagodas appear in China

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<sup>770</sup> Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.233. and Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas*. p.39.

<sup>771</sup> Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.390.

<sup>772</sup> Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*. p.175. and Wang, "What Do Trigrams Have to Do with Buddhas? The Northern Liang Stupas as a Hybrid Spatial Model." p.78.

<sup>773</sup> Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*. p.199.

during the Tang. We will test this in light of the evidence available to us from the HEAP Database below.

As with the analysis of the eight-sided pagodas above, we start by looking at a scatter chart observing the trend for thirteen-eaved pagodas charted against pagodas with any other number of eaves (Fig. 3.36). There are two periods where there is a visible trend towards pagodas with thirteen eaves, the first beginning around the turn of the seventh century and the second from the mid-tenth century. However, the first of these consists of only six examples. Of the pagodas built prior to the Liao period, only five percent feature a thirteen-eaved design. Among those pagodas built during the Liao dynastic period, seventeen percent had thirteen eaves, a more than threefold increase. The breakdown within the HEAP Database states that, of the thirteen-eaved pagodas constructed during this period, sixty-six percent were built by the Liao and twenty-eight percent by the Song.<sup>774</sup>

As far as I am aware, no one has yet given a date for the construction of the first thirteen-eaved pagoda. The earliest example with a confirmed date within the HEAP Database is the Jeonghyesa Pagoda, built by the Silla dynasty in 708, in what is now South Korea. This is shortly followed by the Yangxian Kaimingsi Pagoda which was built in 714 under the Tang in present day Shaanxi province.<sup>775</sup> Although the Kaimingsi Pagoda was the subject of major restorations under both the Song and Qing administrations, its similarity to another two thirteen-eaved Tang pagodas in Shaanxi suggests that the eaves are likely an original Tang

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<sup>774</sup> The remainder being comprised of those built under the Xixia and the Five Dynasties.

<sup>775</sup> Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*. p.330.

period feature.<sup>776</sup> The only other thirteen-eaved pagoda with a confirmed date prior to the first Liao examples within the HEAP Database is the Miaolesi Pagoda. This pagoda was built under the Later Zhou of the Five Dynasties period in Henan in 955.

Although there are no extant Song pagodas with thirteen eaves and a confirmed date of construction that predate their Liao counterparts, we do have a rare record of a non-extant example for which we know both the name of the architect responsible and have an account of the structure's design. The eleventh century Buddhist monk Wenying recorded an exchange that reportedly happened between the architect Yu Hao and the artist Guo Zhongshu in which Guo Zhongshu corrected an error of calculation in Yu Hao's plans.<sup>777</sup> The building under scrutiny was the late eleventh century Kaibao Pagoda of Kaifeng, a thirteen-eaved pagoda that was lost to a lightning strike in 1040.<sup>778</sup> Miller has demonstrated that this pagoda was constructed as part of a wider strategy of imperial legitimation and its position as part of the capital would have meant it could missed by Liao envoys post-Chanyuan.<sup>779</sup>

Using the HEAP Database's 'single feature' function yields very similar trends to those we witnessed in the adoption of octagonal designs across the East Asian region. Fig. 3.37 shows the connections based on number of eaves across the whole database. It is clear that there are some local trends in terms of the number of eaves used in pagoda construction. While three

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<sup>776</sup> These are listed in the HEAP Database as the Heyang Shoushengsi Pagoda and the Heyang Daxiangsi Pagoda.

<sup>777</sup> 文瑩 Wenying, *Yuyu Qinghua*, 玉壺清話 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju (中华书局), 1984). Chapter 2, 21.

<sup>778</sup> Heping Liu, "The 'Water Mill' and Northern Song Imperial Patronage of Art, Commerce, and Science," *The Art Bulletin* 84, no. 4 (2002): 566–95. p.566.

<sup>779</sup> Tracy Miller, "Invoking Higher Authorities: Song Taizong's Quest for Imperial Legitimacy and Its Architectural Legacy," in *State Power in China, 900-1325*, ed. Patricia Ebrey and Paul Jakov Smith (Seattle: Washington University Press, 2017), 29–61. pp.29-30.



and five eaved designs were favoured in the Korean peninsula and Japan, southern and central China appear to be dominated primarily by pagodas with seven eaves. North central China, over the period covered by the HEAP Database, favoured nine-eaved pagodas and in the north and north east of China there is a trend towards thirteen eaves.

Breaking this down by period, Fig. 3.38 filters the database to only display pagodas with a confirmed date built prior to the first Liao pagodas in 1007. As we can see, although we know there to have been thirteen-eaved pagodas constructed during this period, there is no area where it can be considered to have become a trend. Filtering the database to pagodas built prior to 1125 (Fig. 3.39) demonstrates that there must have been a sudden proliferation of thirteen-eaved pagodas between 1007 and 1125. These thirteen-eaved pagodas are concentrated primarily in two groups within territory claimed by the Liao, although there is another grouping that spans territory claimed by the Western Xia and Northern Song towards the north west of the survey region. From this image, it becomes apparent that it was the Liao, more than any other contemporary or prior dynasty that embraced the thirteen-eaved pagoda.

After the Liao period ends in 1125, Fig. 3.40 demonstrates that thirteen-eaved pagodas remain the standard in the former Liao territories and also become the most common form in central China. We also note that, as with the octagonal ground plan, the use of thirteen eaves spreads into the northern Korean peninsula for the first time. Although the Liao cannot be credited with bringing the thirteen-eaved pagoda to China as Steinhardt has claimed, the case for Liao pagodas being a major contributor to the popularisation of this form cannot be ignored. The Liao not only built more surviving thirteen-eaved pagodas than any other

dynasty in the survey region and period but also appear to have spread the thirteen-eaved design to new areas where it did not exist previously. The continued use of thirteen-eaved designs in land formerly claimed by the Liao, once again indicates the level of influence that Liao pagoda design had over this region.

While there have been myriad reasons offered for the Liao move to an octagonal design, the move to thirteen eaves seems to have generated quite the opposite problem. Many researchers such as Liang Sicheng, Zhang Yuhuan, Liu Dunzhen, Ecke, Steinhardt and Kuhn have identified thirteen eaves being a common feature amongst Liao pagodas, but not one of them has referenced any potential reason for the adoption of this style. The only direct reference as to why the Liao specifically may have adopted this style is the suggestion by Franke that the number may be related to the thirteen Buddha Worlds of Japanese esoteric Buddhism.<sup>780</sup> Although no evidence is cited to support this claim, the idea is lent some credence by the connection between Liao and Heian Buddhism explored by Kim that we noted in the section on Liao-Heian relations in Chapter 1.<sup>781</sup>

Unlike the number eight, there is no evidence of the number thirteen holding any great importance in pre-dynastic Kitan cosmology. Buddhism and its related cosmology, on the other hand, may offer some potential reasons for the adoption of a thirteen-eaved design. Aside from Franke's link to the Japanese Shingon school, it has previously been suggested to me that the number thirteen may have been indicative of the thirteen schools of Buddhism

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<sup>780</sup> Herbert Franke, "Consecration of the 'White Stūpa' in 1279," *Asia Major* 7, no. 1 (1994): 155–84. p.166.

<sup>781</sup> See: Youn-mi Kim, "The Missing Link: Tracing the Liao in Heian Japanese Shingon Ritual," in *Perspectives on the Liao* (New Haven: Bard Graduate Centre, 2010). and Kim, "The Hidden Link: Tracing Liao Buddhism in Shingon Ritual."

that arose during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period (420-589). This seems improbable given that any Buddhist temple or monastery would be unlikely to want to represent the various, and sometimes conflicting, schools of Buddhist thought through their pagoda architecture rather than just promoting their own particular sect.<sup>782</sup>

In his work on the symbolism of Buddhist architecture, Snodgrass has suggested that the different number of eaves or levels witnessed in pagoda and stupa architecture reflect different interpretations of the Buddhist cosmos. While seven eaves would represent the seven planets that the Buddha ascended during his nativity, nine-levelled designs follow the same logic but also include the additional planets of Rahu and Ketu from Indian cosmology. Alongside the seven or nine planets of this cosmos there are also surrounding mountain chains that can be subdivided into four levels. A pagoda with eleven or thirteen eaves would therefore represent both the planets and the mountains of the cosmos. In this interpretation, the thirteen-eaved pagoda would represent the planets and mountains while also including the additional planets of Rahu and Ketu.<sup>783</sup>

During the Liao period, Pure Land Buddhism was also in the ascendancy, gaining followers across what is now China and even into Japan. Another potential reason for adopting a thirteen-eaved pagoda can be found in the Three Pure Lands Sutra where the Buddha went through thirteen stages of meditation to achieve enlightenment.<sup>784</sup>

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<sup>782</sup> This was originally suggested to me by a student at the Dharma Drum College in Taipei who pointed me in the direction of one of the university's own publications for reference to the thirteen schools: 圣严法师 Sheng Yan, *Basic Understanding of Buddhism 佛教的基本认识* (Taipei: Fagushan Wenhua Zhongxin 法鼓山文化中心, 2006). p.6.

<sup>783</sup> Snodgrass, *The Symbolism of the Stupa*. pp.242-3

<sup>784</sup> Inagaki Hisao, *The Three Pure Lands Sutra* (Moraga: BDK America, 2003). pp.77-79.

Many of these reasons are difficult to explicitly tie to the Liao, however. Perhaps the most logical prototype and, by extension, the most convincing reason for the construction of future thirteen-eaved Liao pagodas, comes in the form of the Chaoyang North Pagoda. As we established earlier in this chapter, the body of this pagoda was constructed under the Tang – most likely including the number of eaves. It is only the external superstructure of the building below the first eave that is believed to be of Liao date.<sup>785</sup> Fujiwara Takato has previously argued that it was respect for these previous structures that led to pagodas with similar designs being built in the Chaoyang area. He also expressed surprise that, given this respect, the square based pagoda did not spread beyond this region under the Liao.<sup>786</sup> In light of this and, given the lack of other nearby prior examples of thirteen-eaved pagodas, it is probable that the Chaoyang North Pagoda may provide the archetype for Liao thirteen-eaved designs.

### **3.2.2. Brick taking over from timber as the primary construction material for new pagodas:**

The earliest references to a transition from timber to brick built pagodas in the tenth century also go back to the initial surveys of Chinese architecture carried out by Liang Sicheng and his contemporaries in the 1920s. Both Liang Sicheng and Ecke noted not only the transition in materials that occurred during this period but also the increased use of features that

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<sup>785</sup> Kim, “Eternal Ritual in an Infinite Cosmos: The Chaoyang North Pagoda (1043-1044).”

<sup>786</sup> Takato Fujiwara, “The Aspects of Buddhism on Liao-Xi in the 11th Century as Seen through the Relics from the North Pagoda of Chao-Yang (北塔発現文物に見る 11 世紀遼西の仏教的諸相).” p.198.

imitated the use of carpentry in brick construction.<sup>787</sup> Steinhardt has previously stated that the adaptation of timber forms in brick was a natural consequence of the ‘unparalleled level of flexibility, adaptability, and versatility in wood’ that we see in the China region.<sup>788</sup> If this is the case though, then why switch to brick in the first place?

Contrary to the claims made by Ecke and Liang Sicheng, the earliest pagodas in China that feature in the HEAP Database, such as the Songyuesi Pagoda and the Simen Pagoda in Jinan are all made out of brick. The earliest surviving timber pagoda being the monumental Fogongsi Pagoda built by the Liao in 1056. This just serves to highlight, however, the inherent weakness of the dataset that the HEAP Database draws on. By only including extant pagodas, the database fails to include the majority of the timber pagodas that would have been built in both China and Korea that have since been destroyed. We know from written records, such as the *Weishu* and the *Luoyang qielan ji* that the very first pagodas to be built in China were constructed out of wood. As a consequence, the vast majority of these structures have not survived.<sup>789</sup>

It is interesting to note that, of the pagodas in the HEAP Database, the primary construction material used can be divided on present day national borders – with China being almost exclusively dominated by brick pagodas, Japan by wood, and North and South Korea by stone. This can be clearly seen by creating a ‘single feature’ map of the whole database based on each pagoda’s ‘primary construction material’ as in Fig. 3.41. This speaks to not only the

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<sup>787</sup> Ecke, “Structural Features of the Stone Built T’ing-Pagoda: A Preliminary Study.” p.254. and Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.267.

<sup>788</sup> Steinhardt, “Introduction.” p.2.

<sup>789</sup> Wang Yi-t’ung, *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Lo-Yang*.

preservation potential of wood in each of these regions but perhaps also to the availability of raw materials in each country.

Ultimately, it is likely that problems with the structural properties of wood led to the adoption of brick and stone as the primary medium for pagoda construction in the majority of the East Asia region. In the case of Korea, the historical record suggests that some early pagodas were constructed in timber. These included the Hwangnyongsa Pagoda that would likely have rivalled the Fogongsi Pagoda in scale if it had not been burned down during the Mongol invasion of 1238.<sup>790</sup> As things stand, no Korean timber pagodas from the survey period of the HEAP Database survive today. Instead, extant Korean pagodas are built primarily out of stone, especially granite, due to the abundance of this material available in the peninsula.<sup>791</sup>

In the majority of China, it was brick rather than stone that became the most common material used in pagoda construction. Both Liang Sicheng and Lou Qingxi have commented on the increased structural integrity of brick over timber for a tall building such as a pagoda, pointing to the increased threats from lightning, fire and earthquakes for a timber structure.<sup>792</sup> Aside from these structural concerns there may have been another potential reason for the switch to stone and brick pagodas. Guo Qinghua has suggested that tombs in China transitioned from timber to stone or brick due to the position of these materials in the ‘Five

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<sup>790</sup> Soyoung Lee, *Silla: Korea's Golden Kingdom* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013). p.22.

<sup>791</sup> Kim, *Korean Arts Vol. 3: Architecture*. p.123.

<sup>792</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.259. and Lou Qingxi, *Twenty Essays on Chinese Architecture (中國古建築: 二十講)*. p.127. While the case for timber susceptibility to fire is inarguable, recent studies by Zhou Gan at the Forbidden City have demonstrated that Chinese timber frame architecture could withstand high magnitude earthquakes, see: 周乾 Zhou Gan, “The Dynamic Response of Taihedian to Frequent Earthquakes (罕遇地震作用下故宫太和殿抗震性能研究),” *建筑结构学报* 4 (2014): 25–32. and 周乾 Zhou Gan, “Study on the Seismic Behaviour of Taihedian in Response to Earthquakes (故宫太和殿动力特性与常遇地震响应),” *文物保护与考古科学* 15 (2015): 46–53.

Elements' framework. Whereas wood is representative of warmth, birth and life - stone is cold and lifeless, making it more appropriate for a tomb.<sup>793</sup> Pagodas were primarily designed as reliquaries so this may also have been a concern in the choice of construction materials for these monuments but there is no solid evidence to support this hypothesis.

As to what role the Liao played in the adoption of brick as the primary construction material for pagodas, this is difficult to judge based on the evidence available to us from the HEAP Database. As previously stated, with the exception of Japan, there are very few surviving timber pagodas and therefore no way to track the transition from wood to brick designs. One thing that is worth noting as a result of this transition though, is that the Liao may have played a role in the popularity in imitating timber architecture in brick as we will see in the next section.

#### **3.2.4. The adoption of features imitating carpentry in brick – *dougong* brackets:**

While the adoption of brick over wood as the primary construction material for pagodas is difficult to assess based on the evidence of the HEAP Database, one of the reported consequences of this change should be easier to measure. As mentioned in the previous section, the Liao period has been noted for the increased use brick to imitate elements of traditional East Asian carpentry. The HEAP Database records the presence of both real and

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<sup>793</sup> Guo, "Tomb Architecture of Dynastic China: Old and New Questions." p.16.

imitation *dougong* bracket sets and therefore allows us to chart the spread of this phenomenon over time.<sup>794</sup>

The increased presence of imitation *dougong* bracket sets on Liao brick pagodas is another feature that was initially noted by Liang Sicheng.<sup>795</sup> Wang Shaozhou has suggested that the *dougong* on these brick pagodas were not only faithful recreations of the real thing, but also that they represented some of the most complex forms of this technology that were available at the time.<sup>796</sup> This is unsurprising given that surviving Liao timber architecture is also frequently acknowledged as being the pinnacle of the *dougong* bracket set from a functional perspective. At the Fogongsi Pagoda, for example, over fifty different combinations of *dougong* brackets help to support the structure. Liang Sicheng specifically noted that: ‘the student of Chinese architecture can find no better collection for his studies’.<sup>797</sup>

Although the HEAP Database records the presence (or lack thereof) of *dougong* brackets, there is no further division of these bracket sets based on either their configuration or implementation within the structure of the pagoda.<sup>798</sup> Zhang Yuhuan has noted that Liao pagodas use imitation *dougong* brackets in three distinct ways. While some Liao brick pagodas feature imitation *dougong* supporting every eave of the structure, others only have *dougong* below the first eave. Occasionally, Liao pagodas are also found where only the first

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<sup>794</sup> For an explanation of *dougong* brackets and their importance to traditional East Asian architecture, see Chapter 2.

<sup>795</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.271.

<sup>796</sup> Wang Shaozhou, *Chinese Vernacular Architecture Vol.3*. p.330.

<sup>797</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.243.

<sup>798</sup> The different styles and elements of *dougong* bracket sets are a feature of the Architectura Sinica database (<https://architecturasinica.org/index.html>), although this database is mainly focused on timber structures rather than the imitation of these features in brick.



two eaves feature *dougong*.<sup>799</sup> In the case of pagodas where only the first one or two eaves are supported by *dougong*, the remaining eaves are normally corbelled out. The following analysis, however, can only take into account the presence of *dougong* brackets rather than the configuration.

The scatter chart in Fig. 3.42 demonstrates that there was a small trend towards *dougong* brackets around the turn of the seventh century, followed by the main period of proliferation that occurred between the mid-ninth and the mid-eleventh centuries. The seventh century trend towards pagodas featuring *dougong* brackets can be explained by the construction of surviving wooden pagodas in Japan in and around Nara and therefore represent actual timber *dougong* rather than the imitation *dougong* from brick pagodas. Imitation *dougong* brackets reach their pinnacle within the Liao period suggesting that the Liao may have had some role in the popularity of this feature.

Fig. 3.43 shows a ‘single feature’ map with connections marked in blue for those pagodas that have the *dougong* brackets and red for those that do not. By the end of the survey period, we can see distinct regional trends had occurred in the presence of this specific feature. Whereas pagodas built in Japan universally feature *dougong* brackets, those built in the Korean peninsula universally exclude them. This trend is easily explained by the preference for different construction materials used in each of these regions. The timber pagodas in Japan naturally use the feature set associated with timber architecture while rendering an

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<sup>799</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas*. p.146.

accurate imitation of wood in the large masonry blocks used in Korean pagodas would have provided a major challenge.

Spotting trends within China is more difficult however, with many areas seemingly favouring pagodas both with and without *dougong*. While pagodas in the north of the survey area (including the former Liao territory) clearly favour the inclusion of imitation *dougong*, the rest of the China region seems to be divided into much more localised trends. If we break down the timeline of the HEAP Database further, it may be possible to get a clearer picture of how these trends developed. In Fig. 3.44 we can see that, prior to the construction of the first Liao pagodas in 1007, there were very few pagodas featuring imitation *dougong* bracket sets. As we witnessed with the eight-sided pagodas earlier, the main concentration of this feature prior to the Liao was in the former territory of the Wuyue. Although the Kingdom of Wuyue were not the first to build pagodas with imitation *dougong*, it was under this polity that it can first be considered to become a localised trend.

Moving the timeline forward to the end of the Liao period in Fig. 3.45, we can see that between the construction of the first Liao pagoda and the end of the Liao period, there was a significant increase in the number of pagodas with imitation *dougong* brackets being produced throughout China. Observing just those pagodas built during that 118 year period in Fig. 3.46, it becomes clear that, other than a few small localised trends, the vast majority of the pagodas produced during this time featured imitation *dougong*. Although the extent to which this popularity can be attributed to the Liao is difficult to judge, Liao pagodas were once again the first to adopt this feature in the areas the dynasty laid claim over.

It also seems that, once again, this particular element of pagoda design left a lasting legacy within the former Liao territories after the fall of the dynasty. Fig.3.47 demonstrates that, while the majority of pagodas north of the Yangzi kept using imitation *dougong* after the Liao period, the areas south of the river reverted to pagoda designs without this feature. The reason for this probably lies in the adoption of a new style of pagoda in the south of China during the Song period where brick pagodas were clad in timber to give the appearance of being a traditional wooden pagoda.<sup>800</sup> While the brick has survived at these structures, in most cases, the timber exteriors along with any *dougong* that they may have featured have since been lost. Zhang Yuhuan and Xiao Mo have previously noted how this divide in pagoda designs occurred either side of the Yangzi - it is interesting to witness how the HEAP Database supports the concept of the river as a border between these two different forms of pagoda design.<sup>801</sup>

### **3.2.5. A shift to ‘solid-core’ designs with limited or no interior space:**

One of the most commonly noted features of Liao pagodas is their lack of interior space.<sup>802</sup> As we noted in a previous section of this chapter, ninety-one percent of the extant examples included in the HEAP Database are recorded as a negative in the ‘interior access’ field. I appreciate the translation of Guo Daiheng here though, in terming pagodas without interior access as ‘solid-core’ pagodas, as this is an important reminder that the lack of interior space may be a deliberate feature in itself, rather than simply the absence of one that the

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<sup>800</sup> Guo Daiheng, “The Liao, Song, Xi Xia, and Jin Dynasties.” p.154.

<sup>801</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *Famous Pagodas of China*. p.51. Xiao Mo, *History of Chinese Architecture*. p.178.

<sup>802</sup> See for example: Sickman and Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China*. p.271, Ecke, “Structural Features of the Stone Built T’ing-Pagoda: A Preliminary Study.” and Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.227.

terminology in the HEAP Database might suggest.<sup>803</sup> As to whether solid-core pagodas became more popular in the Liao period across the survey region as a whole, the evidence in the HEAP Database does not support this notion.

Fig. 3.48 shows a scatter chart and trend line for the presence of ‘interior access’ at pagodas within the HEAP Database. As we can see, although there are fluctuations throughout the Liao period, the distribution between pagodas with and without interior access remains relatively even. Zhang Yuhuan has previously commented that Song dynasty pagodas can be fairly evenly divided into those that contain accessible interior space and those that do not.<sup>804</sup> The greatest trend towards solid-core designs actually occurs before the Liao period starts, reaching its peak in the early eighth century. We can break this down further, however, by observing the trends over time for ‘interior access’ across the region.

Fig. 3.49 shows the single feature map for ‘interior access’ across the whole of the HEAP Database. As we can see there are distinct regional trends for this feature with Japan and the majority of China opting to include interior space in their pagodas. The Korean peninsula, north eastern China and the south east coast of China are the areas where the solid-core design seems to have become more dominant. Breaking this down further by period we note that, prior to 907 (Fig. 3.50), solid-core pagodas are the more popular option for much of northern and southern central China. Fig. 3.51 demonstrates that this trend continued until the first Liao pagodas were constructed in 1007. However, by the end of the Liao period in 1125, as seen in Fig. 3.52, the picture has changed dramatically. Pagodas with interior access

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<sup>803</sup> Guo Daiheng, “The Liao, Song, Xi Xia, and Jin Dynasties.” p.179.

<sup>804</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas*. p.102.

become the norm for most of China with solid-core designs only maintaining their popularity in the north east and south east.

Regarding the Liao's role in the popularity of this feature, we once again come across a familiar pattern. Although the Liao were by no means the first to adopt the solid-core design, they were the first to adopt it within the districts they laid claim to. Also, the Liao pagodas can once more be noted for their uniformity in this regard, (Fig. 3.53), with the entire Liao territory trending towards solid-core designs (with the exception of those pagodas nearest to the Song border, the majority of which were built by other polities in different periods). Moving the timeline forward in Fig. 3.54 to show just those pagodas that were produced post-1125, it is striking to note that the tradition started by the Liao in the north east was continued by their successors in a period when all other regions bar the Korean peninsula were moving towards designs that included accessible interior space. This suggests that Liao pagodas potentially had a continued influence both within the former Liao territories as well as the immediate vicinity around them.

### **3.2.6. The eaves of the pagoda becoming more densely clustered together – also known as the *miyan* style:**

Although, *miyan* can be directly translated as 'dense eaves', describing a pagoda as *miyan* in Chinese language literature has a set of structural connotations that go beyond simply having eaves that are densely clustered together. As Liu Dunzhen has previously stated, a *miyan* pagoda should not have multiple interior stories and is more likely to have a solid-core

design.<sup>805</sup> *Miyan* pagodas have also been noted for being more likely than their *louge* counterparts to imitate timber construction techniques and to have thirteen eaves.<sup>806</sup> It may therefore be the case that we see some crossover between the previous analyses of the ‘interior space’, ‘*dougong* brackets’ and ‘number of eaves’ fields and the analysis for ‘dense eaves’ here.

Out of all the 557 pagodas featured in the HEAP Database, only 126 possess dense eaves. The scatter chart in Fig. 3.55 demonstrates that the majority of those were produced in two periods, the first in the eighth century and the second in the eleventh century during the period of Liao pagoda construction. There were more *miyan* pagoda produced in the eleventh century than any other period covered by the HEAP Database, both in terms of the absolute number constructed and as a percentage of all pagodas during that period.

Dense eaves are very common among the surviving Liao pagodas of the HEAP Database, with ninety-one percent of all the recorded examples having a dense-eaved design. Xu Huadang has previously stated that Liao *miyan* pagodas represent a step forward in design and complexity over their Tang counterparts.<sup>807</sup> Despite this, there has not been much speculation as to why the Liao chose to adopt this style. Zhang Yuhuan has suggested two possible hypotheses: that it could be due partly to a belief that this design best represented the Buddha and partly because the cold winter conditions in the north were unsuitable for climbing pagodas.<sup>808</sup> While the first of these suggestions cannot be tested using the functions

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<sup>805</sup> Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.220.

<sup>806</sup> Zhang Yijie, *Pagodas*. p.45. and Wang Qijun, *Visual Dictionary of Chinese Architecture*. p.203.

<sup>807</sup> Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. p.43.

<sup>808</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas*. pp.150-5.

of the HEAP Database, Fig. 3.56 offers some credibility to the suggestion that temperature or environmental factors may have played a part in the adoption of dense eaved designs. This single feature map, of just the Liao pagodas in the database, demonstrates that the only areas where non-dense eaved pagodas produced under the Liao became a trend were in the southern and western circuits. The one exception to this rule being the Qingzhou White Pagoda which has been highlighted with a green circle.

Zooming out to look at the entire survey region in Fig. 3.57, we can see that there is no other area outside of the Liao territory that became quite so dominated by dense eaved pagodas throughout the period of the HEAP Database. If we observe just the period prior to the arrival of Liao pagodas in 1007 (Fig. 3.58), we see that the majority of the survey area features pagodas without dense eaves, with Hebei and Henan being the only area fairly evenly divided between the two forms. Fig. 3.59 shows that, although Hebei and Henan may have begun a potential trend towards dense eaves, this trend had ended by the Liao period with the period 907-1007 showing no trend towards dense eaved designs in either of these provinces. Any adoption of this design by the Liao then can only be attributed to the Liao rather than any of their contemporaries.

Moving the timeline to the end of the Liao period in Fig. 3.60, we can see that this is the primary period of expansion for pagodas with dense eaves. The main areas to adopt dense eaves are the north east and the south west of China. The adoption of dense eaves seems to have been primarily driven by the Liao in the north and the Kingdom of Dali, during the same period, in the south west. It is only the trend started by the Liao that continued beyond 1125, however, with Fig. 3.61 showing that after this period the south west of China returned to

constructing pagodas without dense eaved designs. What is interesting here is that the former Liao territories not only maintained the use of dense eaved designs but also that these designs spread into the Korean peninsula as well. This once again demonstrates that Liao pagoda designs may have had an impact beyond Liao borders on the Koryŏ dynasty in Korea.

### **3.2.7. The base of the pagoda becoming increasingly complex with the adoption of features such as a lotus base:**

We have already noted that Liang Sicheng described the Liao dynasty as part of his ‘Period of Elaboration’ in pagoda design. One element of this reported ‘elaboration’ was an increasing complexity of the bases or pedestals on which pagodas were built.<sup>809</sup> Both Zhang Yuhuan and Xu Huadang in their respective surveys of Chinese pagoda architecture noted that Liao pagodas are known for having complex base designs.<sup>810</sup> While ‘complexity’ is difficult to measure, the HEAP Database does contain three fields that could be considered to be potentially indicative of a more complex base design: ‘extended height before first eave’, ‘additional base incorporated’ and ‘lotus base’.

Each of these features see a marked increase during the Liao period, with ninety-three percent of the pagodas that possess all three together being built during or after the Liao dynasty. Fig. 3.62 maps the geographic extent of only those pagodas that had the complete set of all three features related to a ‘complex base’. Prior to the first confirmed construction date of a Liao pagoda in 1007, pagodas with this more complex base design only existed within China and

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<sup>809</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p.266.

<sup>810</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas*. p.155 and Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. p.43.



extended no further north than Hebei. After 1007 we witness the now familiar pattern of pagodas with these features spreading into the north east through territory claimed by the Liao during the Liao period and then on to Korea after 1125.

Out of the three fields in the HEAP Database that cover base design, the one that is perhaps most explicitly associated with the Liao is the 'lotus base'. Zhang Yuhuan, Youn-mi Kim and Wang Shaozhou have each described the 'lotus base' as being a typical Liao feature.<sup>811</sup> The use of the lotus motif in the architecture of the Liao goes beyond pagodas as well, appearing as a frequent symbol in in tombs and upon coffins.<sup>812</sup> The lotus base is the least common of the three fields across the HEAP Database as a whole, with just fifteen percent of all pagodas possessing one. In comparison, sixty-seven percent of Liao pagodas feature a 'lotus base' suggesting that the Liao may have played an important part in the development of this particular feature.

The scatter chart in Fig. 3.63 demonstrates that the largest spike in pagodas constructed with a lotus base occurred not only within the Liao period but also correlates with the majority of Liao pagoda construction that occurred in the eleventh century. The close relationship between the Liao and the lotus base is confirmed by the 'single feature' analysis in Figs 3.64-3.67. Observing the whole of the HEAP Database in Fig. 3.64, we can see that the only area where pagodas with a lotus base become a trend is within the Liao territories that were claimed by the Liao. The Liao responsibility for this trend in the north east can be

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<sup>811</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas*. p.155, Kim, "Virtual Pilgrimage and Virtual Geography: Power of Liao Miniature Pagodas (907-1125)." p.24, and Wang Shaozhou, *Chinese Vernacular Architecture Vol.3*. p.393.

<sup>812</sup> Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. pp.341-344, Kuhn, "'Liao Architecture': Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?" pp.347-8.

demonstrated by comparing Figs 3.65 and 3.66 where we can see that the trend for lotus bases begins only after 1007 when the programme of Liao pagoda construction starts. Observing just those pagodas with a confirmed date of construction after 1125, (Fig. 3.67), we notice that the trend for lotus bases continues in the former Liao territories even after the fall of the dynasty.

As to why the Liao specifically chose to adopt the lotus base as a feature of their pagoda design, there have thus far been no suggestions in the existing literature. Karlsson has noted the lotus as being one of the most ubiquitous symbols of Buddhism at sacred sites – appearing across a wide range of different periods and regions.<sup>813</sup> Snodgrass has suggested that stupas and pagodas may have adopted this feature as lotus leaves are often seen as supporting or holding up the universe and Buddhas are often pictured as being seated upon lotus thrones.<sup>814</sup> Given that, as we explored in Chapter 2, pagodas are often conceived of as a representation of the Buddha, the lotus base could potentially represent a lotus throne for the building.

### **3.2.8. Increase in average pagoda height:**

One frequent assertion about the Liao-Song period in texts on Chinese architectural history is that it is often seen as being the ‘climax’ of pagoda design.<sup>815</sup> From Liang Sicheng terming it

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<sup>813</sup> Karlsson, “The Formation of Early Buddhist Visual Culture.” p.69.

<sup>814</sup> Snodgrass, *The Symbolism of the Stupa*. p.99.

<sup>815</sup> Guo Daiheng, “The Liao, Song, Xi Xia, and Jin Dynasties.” p.180. For other references to this period representing a high point in pagoda architecture see: Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.220, Wang Shaozhou, *Chinese Vernacular Architecture Vol.3*. p.133,

as the ‘Period of Elaboration’ onwards, pagodas from this period have been noted for their increased sophistication over that which came before (and often after).<sup>816</sup> While this is something that is difficult to measure with any degree of objectivity, there are a variety of characteristics within the HEAP Database that could be considered to be used as potential indicators of this reported development.

The inclusion of imitation *dougong* brackets, exterior relief sculpture and a lotus base are all surface level features that could be associated with ‘elaboration’ in the aesthetics of pagoda design that could not have been included for any structural reason. The presence of each of these features does rise dramatically during the Liao period with increases of seventy-three percent for *dougong* brackets, forty-three percent for exterior relief sculpture and one-hundred-and-eighteen percent for the lotus base. However, if there is one feature in the database that would be considered most indicative of the concept of pagoda design reaching its ‘climax’, it would have to be height. Zhang Yuhuan has noted that part of the ‘development’ of pagodas in the Liao period is that we can witness a distinct increase in the average height of pagodas from those that came before.

Being the tallest has always been an overt expression of political aspiration and achievement. Of all the superlatives that can be used in architecture and engineering, it is the most frequently cited as a sign of progress, stability and power.<sup>817</sup> Even now, competition remains fierce for the tallest building in the world. When the Kingdom Holding Company, an investment firm headed by Prince Alwaleed bin Talal of Saudi Arabia, announced that they

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<sup>816</sup> Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. p. 265.

<sup>817</sup> Ian Borden, Murray Fraser, and Barbara Penner, eds., *Forty Ways To Think About Architecture: Architectural History and Theory Today* (Chichester: Wiley, 2014). p.67.

would begin work on the world's first 1000m tall building, their spokesman was quoted as saying:

The decision of the partners to build the world's tallest building further demonstrates their belief in investing in this nation. We intend Kingdom Tower to become both an economic engine and a proud symbol of the Kingdom's economic and cultural stature in the world community. We envision Kingdom Tower as a new iconic marker of Jeddah's historic importance.<sup>818</sup>

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, East Asia has also been a major player in this competitive architectural development. The Tokyo Skytree (634m) in Japan, Lotte World Tower (555m) in South Korea and Taipei 101 (508m) in Taiwan provide ample evidence that tall buildings are something current East Asian nations are using to proclaim their presence on the global stage. In the past thirty years China has been at the forefront of this vertical revolution, building more skyscrapers and high rises than any other country.<sup>819</sup> At the time of writing, over half of the world's top twenty-five tallest buildings are in China.<sup>820</sup> However, this competitive element in architectural construction is nothing new: as early as the Tang dynasty, East Asian temple building had already become a competitive arena. In the early eighth century, the Emperor Zhongzong was petitioned by one of his subjects informing him:

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<sup>818</sup> Quote taken from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/aug/02/saudi-arabia-tallest-kingdom-tower>, (accessed 10/12/2015)

<sup>819</sup> Chow, R. Y. 'In a Field of Party Walls: Drawing Shanghai's Lilong' in *Journal of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 73, No. 1, 16.

<sup>820</sup> Based on data from the CTBUH (Council for Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat) database (including buildings that are both completed and under construction): <http://www.ctbuh.org/TallBuildings/tabid/485/language/en-GB/Default.aspx> (accessed 10/06/2018)

I see many people racing to sponsor the building of Buddhist and Daoist temples. The number is constantly increasing. Everyone was determined to build larger and larger temples, and decorated them more and more lavishly. More than one million in cash was needed [for building] a large monastery and thirty to fifty thousand were needed for a small monastery.<sup>821</sup>

Given this level of competition in temple construction, it is unsurprising that pagodas received such heavy investment. As a tall monument in a building tradition where architecture is primarily expanded on the horizontal plane, pagodas during the period of study covered by the HEAP Database would always have had a very visible presence.<sup>822</sup> Their value as both a Buddhist monument combined with this position in the architectural landscape made them a practical investment in terms of both religious and political impact. It is probably no coincidence then, given that the Liao and Northern Song were constantly in competition with one another (if not at war), that the pagodas produced by these two dynasties are some of the tallest pagodas in East Asian history.<sup>823</sup> Neither the Song dynasty Liaodi Pagoda (84m), nor the Liao dynasty Daming Pagoda (80m) were surpassed in height until the twentieth century.<sup>824</sup> Multiple accounts state that the Liaodi pagoda of the Northern Song was built as both an imposing border monument and a means to look over that border and observe the Liao.<sup>825</sup>

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<sup>821</sup> Translation drawn from: Ho, p. 2004. "Building on Hope: Monastic Sponsors and Merit in Sixth- to Tenth-Century China." *Asia Major* 17, 1: 50.

<sup>822</sup> For the tradition in Chinese architecture of expansion on the horizontal plane, see: Steinhart, "Chinese Architectural History in the Twenty-First Century." p.41.

<sup>823</sup> A case I made in my MA thesis, for more see: Dugdale, "Pagodas, Patronage and Power." Chapter 3.

<sup>824</sup> By any extant pagodas at least - there may have been pagodas that do not survive that may have surpassed these monuments in height. The record is currently held by the Tianning Pagoda (153.8m) in Changzhou that was inaugurated in 2007: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-04/30/content\\_864654.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-04/30/content_864654.htm) (accessed 08/02/2016).

<sup>825</sup> Wang Shaozhou, *Chinese Vernacular Architecture Vol.3*. p.177.

As covered in Chapter 2, the HEAP Database records not only the height of each pagoda but also uses NASA's publicly available SRTM (Shuttle Radar Topography Mission) data to give a sense of the immediate topography surrounding each building. The combination of these two factors can allow us to compare the height of pagodas from the Liao and Song with those of other periods and also observe the level of visibility these monuments may have had within the landscape. It can then be assessed whether Song-Liao competition may have been a factor in increasing pagoda heights.

While the average height of pagodas across the entire HEAP Database stands at 25.3m, the average height of Liao pagodas is some fourteen percent higher at 28.8m. Pagodas constructed by the Song also exceed the database average figure with an average height of 27.9m. The average pagoda height for the Liao period from 907-1125 across the entire region as a whole stands at 27.5m. This suggests that Zhang Yuhuan's hypothesis that this period may have spurred an increase in overall pagoda height is largely supported by the evidence from the HEAP Database. The case becomes more compelling when we compare the pagodas built during this period with only those constructed prior to 907. The average height of pagodas before the start of the Liao dynasty stands at just 19.3m, demonstrating that the Liao period saw an increase in average pagoda height of forty-two percent from that which came before. If we observe just the period of confirmed Liao pagoda construction between 1007 and 1125, we can see that the average height increased yet again to 28.2m resulting in a height increase of forty-six percent from pre-Liao averages.

If the Liao period represented the ‘climax’ of pagoda architecture though, we would expect this increase in height to dissipate after the fall of the dynasty. By observing just those pagodas that have a construction date after the end of the Liao dynasty, it can be seen that the average height during this period is 25.7m. While this figure does still just exceed the average pagoda height across the HEAP Database, it represents a nine percent decrease from the average pagoda height recorded between 1007 and 1125. Although it cannot be proven that competition between the Liao and Song was a driving factor for this increase in pagoda height during the Liao period the way the dates line up does make a persuasive case in support of this argument.

If pagoda height was being influenced by competition then we would expect the polities that produced them to aim for maximum visibility when choosing the location and height of the pagodas they were constructing. Across the HEAP Database, the average ‘visibility index’ score is sixty-three percent which is classified as ‘high visibility’.<sup>826</sup> Liao pagodas fall roughly in line with the wider database, with an average ‘visibility index’ of sixty-five percent. Song pagodas are slightly ahead with an average ‘visibility index’ of sixty-seven percent but this still places them within the ‘high visibility’ range.

Fig. 3.68 shows a ‘single feature’ map of just the Liao pagodas based on their ‘visibility index’ score. As we can see the pagodas range from ‘very low’ through to ‘very high’ visibility with some distinct localised trends emerging. The majority of the Liao pagodas are of ‘medium’ or higher visibility, the main exception being the eastern half of the central

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<sup>826</sup> As explained in Chapter 2, each pagoda in the HEAP Database is assigned a ‘visibility index’ score based on the percentage of locations from which the pagoda is visible within a five kilometre radius. These scores are then converted on a five-point scale ranging from ‘very low’ through to ‘very high’ visibility.

circuit. The areas where pagodas have been constructed with the highest level of visibility, on the other hand, are in and around the Liao-Song(-Western Xia) border zone in the southern and western circuits as well as in the far north and east of the area covered by Liao pagoda construction.

The higher visibility of Liao pagodas constructed in the southern border-zone does support the suggestion that Liao pagodas were being built in such a way as to provide a visual challenge in their rivalry with the Song. However, the lower visibility of pagodas built in the south east of Liao territory, near the Korean peninsula, indicates that this kind of display was not pursued in the same way with regard to the Kingdom of Koryŏ. To see why this might be the case, Fig. 3.69 reproduces the same map as Fig. 3.68 but also includes nearby pagodas built by other polities to supplement the Liao examples. It becomes apparent that while the pagodas built by the Song (and, previously, the Tang) in the Liao-Song border zone were constructed with a high level of visibility, those built in the Korean peninsula traditionally had a very low level of visibility within the landscape. This supports the conclusion that it may have been competition that was driving pagoda visibility in the Liao period as, when the competition was absent in the Korean peninsula region, the drive for more visible pagodas seems to have disappeared along with it.

Another reason for the discrepancy in visibility in pagodas constructed by the Liao in different parts of their territory could be changes in topography across the various regions that may have made construction of highly visible pagodas difficult or even impossible. Liao pagodas matching the visibility of local rivals could be as much a reflection of the local landscape as any attempt at creating a competitive edge. While topography would have been



a factor in pagoda visibility, further evidence from the HEAP Database demonstrates that it cannot counteract the competition theory entirely. As well as a ‘top visibility index’ that includes the height of the pagoda in its calculations, the database also records a ‘base visibility index’ for each building that includes just the visibility of the pagoda site at ground level. By observing the discrepancy between the ‘base visibility index’ and the ‘top visibility index’, we can see the effect topography had on each pagoda’s individual visibility as well as seeing if pagoda height could be used to counteract a low visibility location.

If pagodas were built to a short height, or topography not taken into account by the builders, the ‘top visibility index’ should increase roughly in proportion with the ‘base visibility index’. By creating a scatter chart that logs the ‘base’ against the ‘top’ visibility index scores, any deviations from a strong, positive, linear trend line would indicate that pagoda height was having an effect on visibility above and beyond what its topographical positioning would otherwise allow. In Fig. 3.70 we can see that in the case of pagodas constructed in what is now North Korea there is very little deviation from the positive linear trend. Given that average pagoda height across all of the North Korean pagodas featured in the HEAP Database is just 5.7m, this correlation is what we might have expected to see. The chart based on Liao pagodas in Fig. 3.71, on the other hand, creates a very different picture. There are many pagodas here that stray below the linear trend, often to a significant degree. This suggests that, in certain cases, the Liao were building pagodas to a height that would dramatically increase their level of visibility.

Highlighting some specific examples can help to illustrate how Liao pagodas height could be adjusted to suit the surrounding topography and achieve maximum visibility when desired.

Fig. 3.72 shows the elevation and visibility maps for the Baoan Pagoda, located east of present day Tianjin and within the Liao-Song border zone. At just 13m tall, this pagoda is well below the average for a Liao pagoda, especially in this area of the Liao territory. However, given the relatively flat local topography, this height is enough to raise the ‘base visibility index’ score of twenty-six percent up to a ‘top visibility index’ of one hundred percent. This means that, assuming there was nothing else blocking line-of sight, the Baoan Pagoda could be seen from anywhere within a five-kilometre radius.

In less favourable topography, taller pagodas could be used to achieve a similar effect. Fig. 3.73 shows the elevation and visibility data for the Chongxingsi East Pagoda. Despite the significantly more challenging terrain, the 43.9m tall height of this pagoda raises its ‘base visibility index’ of forty percent up to a ‘top visibility index’ of eighty-three percent. Equally, the steep inclines around the Baoding Xingwen pagodas seen in Fig. 3.74 were overcome (to an extent) by this pagoda’s 27m height, raising the ‘base visibility index’ of just seventeen percent by a factor of more than three to a ‘top visibility index’ of fifty-seven percent. This means that the builders constructing Liao pagodas had the requisite knowledge and skill to be able to adjust pagoda height to generate greater overall visibility irrespective of local topology. It follows that areas in which Liao pagodas achieved only low visibility, that this was a conscious choice by those ordering the construction of the building. Given that high visibility is not a universal trait of Liao pagodas then, it seems that other factors such as competition or other political motives may have played a role in their level of visibility.

Fig. 3.75 compares the ‘base’ and ‘top’ visibility of pagodas constructed by the Song. Like the Liao chart, we see significant deviations from the trend line in a large number of Song

pagodas. It is also worth noting the lines marked on both Fig. 3.71 and 3.75 denoting the average visibility of both Liao and Song pagodas against the average across the whole database. While both polities managed to achieve a similar level of ‘top’ visibility, the Liao pagodas demonstrate a higher average base visibility of forty-nine percent against the Song average of forty-six percent. This indicates that the builders constructing Song pagodas were even more adept than those operating under the Liao at using pagoda height to create maximum visibility.

Comparing the Liao and Song charts with those pagodas constructed prior to 907 displayed on the scatter chart in Fig. 3.76, we can see the development in pagoda visibility that must have taken place during the Liao period. The pre-907 pagodas, while still deviating from the linear trend, demonstrate lower average scores in both their ‘base visibility index’ and ‘top visibility index’ scores. This is an indication of not only the increase in pagoda height that occurred during the Liao period but also suggests that potential visibility was becoming a more important factor in the choice of construction sites.

One pagoda that provides a practical example of how height and location could come together to create maximum visibility is the Daming Pagoda built within the walls of the Liao central capital of Zhongjing. At 80m tall the Daming pagoda is the tallest of all the Liao pagodas. Fig. 3.77 shows a view of the Zhongjing city site from outside the remains of the city walls to the south west. At a distance of almost three kilometres, the Daming pagoda remains clearly visible above the height of the wall. On the other hand, the later Jin dynasty pagoda that was also built in the city, at just 24m tall, is almost lost to view entirely. While the five kilometre visibility radius explored by the HEAP Database is a practical measure of

visibility, the height and location of the Daming Pagoda make it visible in certain directions from a far greater distance.

Fig. 3.78 (derived using the ‘viewshed analysis’ function of ArcGIS rather than the HEAP Database) demonstrates the area from which the Daming Pagoda could be seen (weather and eyesight permitting).<sup>827</sup> In certain directions there is a clean line of sight to the pagoda from as far as forty kilometres away. One of these directions of maximum visibility is the probable route taken by Song envoys to the city suggesting that both the pagoda’s position and height could have been selected to achieve maximum impact for travellers along this route.<sup>828</sup>

Combined with the evidence above, Liao-Song competition does seem to have been a factor in increasing pagoda heights during the Liao period.

Competition or otherwise, the Liao period saw an undeniable rise in average pagoda height – a rise in which the Liao played a significant part. In fact, across all of the individual features of pagoda design we have looked at in this section, the role of pagodas built within the Liao territory in spreading each of these changes has been almost undeniable. Although in each case we cannot attribute the change entirely to pagodas produced with official Liao dynasty patronage, it has been repeatedly demonstrated that pagodas constructed within this polity embraced new ideas in design that had not previously existed in the Northeast Asian region.

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<sup>827</sup> This image was generated by Joshua Wright as a part of the AHRC funded ‘Understanding Cities’ project in 2015 (<https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FL011727%2F1> – accessed 14/8/2017). For further details on ‘viewshed analyses’ and their application, there is a guide on the ESRI website: <http://desktop.arcgis.com/en/arcmap/10.3/tools/spatial-analyst-toolbox/using-viewshed-and-observer-points-for-visibility.htm>.

<sup>828</sup> The probable envoy route here has been generated by determining ‘least-cost paths’ through viewshed analysis. For a practical guide and case studies of this methodology, see: Jay Lee and Dan Stucky, “On Applying Viewshed Analysis for Determining Least-Cost Paths on Digital Elevation Models,” *International Journal of Geographical Information Science* 12, no. 8 (1998): 891–905.

In many cases, the adoption of individual pagoda features during this period continued on within the former Liao territory even after the dynasty had fallen with certain features even spreading beyond its borders.

### **3.3. Influences to and from Liao pagoda designs:**

One of the most contentious issues in the field of Liao architecture is the question of what it may have been that inspired Liao architectural designs. As we established in Chapter 1, the pre-dynastic Kitan people lacked any major tradition in permanent architecture and, as we have witnessed in the previous section, many of the areas claimed by the Liao did not have pre-existing pagodas, or at least not those with the same feature-set as pagodas built under the patronage of the Liao polity.

The architectural traditions of many different polities have been suggested as the basis for the Liao's own architecture, while it has also been argued that Liao architecture may represent something new entirely.<sup>829</sup> The evidence from the previous two sections certainly suggests that there must have been at least a degree of Liao innovation. Section 3.1. of this chapter has already demonstrated that all of the pagoda types produced by the Liao were either entirely new creations or, at the very least, new to the areas in which they were introduced by the Liao. Equally, section 3.2. showed that the Liao played a significant role in many of the major changes that occurred in pagoda design during the Liao period. This does not preclude

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<sup>829</sup> The case for Liao innovation owes a lot to the work of Steinhardt who has argued for it since her first article on the subject of Liao architecture in 1994 as well as later works, see: Steinhardt, "Liao: An Architectural Tradition in the Making." and Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*.

the idea, though, that Liao designs must have been, at least in part, inspired by the pagodas of their predecessors and contemporaries in the East Asian region.

In the final section of this chapter, the HEAP Database will be used to help test which polities may have exercised the greatest influence over Liao designs. These same tools can then be used to assess any influence that Liao pagoda design may have had on their neighbours and successors. This is a methodology that could potentially offer a counterpoint to the narrative of the Liao polity as a passive receptacle of other cultures; rather, demonstrating it to be a political unit with agency over its architectural designs and influence over its contemporaries.

### **3.3.1. Potential influences on the design of Liao pagodas:**

The fact that Liao pagodas are almost universally studied as a small part of a greater national history of Chinese architecture means that their development has often been incorporated into chronological typologies of wider Chinese pagoda development.<sup>830</sup> While it would be impossible to ignore Liao pagodas in any typology of this kind (as the only surviving timber pagoda of the period, the Yingxian pagoda alone necessitates Liao inclusion), the role of structures constructed within this polity in furthering the development of Chinese (and East Asian) pagoda designs is often side-lined.<sup>831</sup> This reduced agency on the part of the Liao is

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<sup>830</sup> A process that began with the typology entitled: 'Evolution of Types of the Buddhist Pagoda' by Liang Sicheng but has also carried on through the works of his successors specialising in pagodas such as Zhang Yuhuan and Cheng Peng. See: Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition.*, Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas*. And Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas*.

<sup>831</sup> See, for example, the number of architectural texts that we explored in Chapter 2 that refer to Liao buildings as part of the 'Song period' with little or no reference to their Liao origin.

sometimes parcelled up into the blanket statement that Liao pagodas must have been based on either those of the ‘Chinese’ or the ‘Han’ people, going back to the ‘China and the other’ dichotomy that we broke down in Chapter 1.<sup>832</sup> Many Chinese architectural history texts also attempt to establish specific polities within what is now China that may have been the inspiration for Liao pagoda designs. The chronological nature of most texts on Chinese architectural history means that Liao pagodas are most frequently associated with those of their direct predecessors, the Tang.

The Tang dynasty certainly makes for a logical Buddhist architectural tradition for the Liao to follow in. As well as the chronology working out well, the Tang were also seen as the precursor to Buddhist architectural developments not only within China but also in the other nations surveyed by the HEAP Database – North Korea, South Korea and Japan - as well.<sup>833</sup> The Japanese monk Ennin, for example, who travelled within Tang China reported being astounded by the sheer number of temples he encountered within the walls of the capital Chang’an before returning to establish his own temples in Japan.<sup>834</sup> While the Tang did previously lay claim to much of the territory that would later be adopted by the Liao polity, the HEAP Database suggests there were very few Tang dynasty pagodas constructed within the area that would become Liao territory. The notable exception to this rule being the Chaoyang North Pagoda which was, as discussed earlier in this chapter, later incorporated into a larger Liao superstructure.

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<sup>832</sup> Xiao Mo, for example, simply states that the Liao and Jin were both inspired by ‘Han’ architecture without offering more specific detail of the dynasty, polity or period they may have been influenced by, see: Xiao Mo, *History of Chinese Architecture*. p.150.

<sup>833</sup> For a recent assessment of the influence of the Tang (as well as those that came before) in the spread of early Buddhist East Asia architecture, see: Steinhardt, *Chinese Architecture in an Age of Turmoil, 200-600*. p.342-5.

<sup>834</sup> Chye Kiang Heng, “Visualizing Everyday Life in the City: A Categorization System for Residential Wards in Tang Chang’an,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73, no. 1 (2014): 91–117. p.95.

Steinhardt has suggested that the Chaoyang North Pagoda may have provided a stepping stone towards the original Liao designs we see developed in the eleventh century, while Fujiwara has indicated the importance of this monument on other Liao pagodas in the immediate vicinity around Chaoyang.<sup>835</sup> Despite this, the Chaoyang North Pagoda alone cannot be seen as the basis for the entire canon of Liao pagoda architecture. Even after its rebuilding during the Liao period, the Chaoyang North Pagoda does not match the HEAP Database criteria for the Liao archetypal pagoda that was identified in our typology earlier in this chapter. The very fact that eight distinct pagoda styles were recorded as a part of that typology precludes the possibility of any one pagoda providing the basis for all subsequent Liao designs.

Aside from the Chaoyang North Pagoda, however, there are few specifics normally given as to which Tang pagodas it may have been that inspired Liao designs. Tang influence on the Liao is normally expressed as a general trend and frequently juxtaposed against the idea of Song inventiveness breaking from previous Tang tradition.<sup>836</sup> It has also been suggested that it may have been these very Song developments that provided the impetus for the design of Liao pagodas. Guo Daiheng, for example, discusses the direct impact that Song architecture

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<sup>835</sup> Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. Takato Fujiwara, “The Aspects of Buddhism on Liao-Xi in the 11th Century as Seen through the Relics from the North Pagoda of Chao-Yang (北塔発現文物に見る 11 世紀遼西の仏教的諸相).”

<sup>836</sup> Examples of this line of argument include: Ding Yuan, *Chinese Archit.* p.54, Qiao Yun, *Chinese Historical Architecture*. p.119, Xiao Mo, *History of Chinese Architecture*. p.151, as well as the early monographs of Zhang Yuhuan: Zhang Yuhuan, *Famous Pagodas of China*. p.178, and Zhang Yuhuan, *The Cream of Chinese Pagodas* (中國古塔精粹). p.8.



would have had on ‘other ethnicities’ at the time with Kuhn also suggesting that the Liao may have fallen into the ‘Chinese sphere’ of the Song in terms of architectural design.<sup>837</sup>

The assumption that the Liao represented a continuation of Tang pagoda design, whereas the Song did not, may find its origin in two factors. The first is that much of the literature on Chinese architecture in this period focusses on timber structures where there is a demonstrable continuation in the use of carpentry between the Tang and Liao.<sup>838</sup> The second reason is more focussed on the positioning of the pagoda within the temple complex rather than any features of the design of the pagodas itself. Whereas the Liao, for the most part, continued to place the pagoda at the centre of the temple complex as it would have been in the Tang, the Song can be witnessed in this period to start moving the pagoda off the central axis or even outside the temple entirely as a separate monument.<sup>839</sup> Neither of these points is actually indicative of the structure of Song brick pagodas being any more differentiated from their Tang counterparts than Liao brick pagodas.

More specific examples of potential Tang archetypes for Liao designs include the mention of eight sided pagodas in Zhejiang and Jiangsu put forward by Kuhn as well as the suggestion by Liu Dunzhen that Shanxi had already begun to move towards eight sided designs in the Tang.<sup>840</sup> As we explored in the section on the Liao adoption of octagonal pagoda designs, there is no suggestion as to how the Liao may have been inspired by these designs that lay outside their own jurisdiction. Even if any of these structures were the basis for the shape of

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<sup>837</sup> Guo Daiheng, *History of Ancient Chinese Architecture: Volume 3, the Song, Liao, Jin and Xixia*. p.1. and Kuhn, “‘Liao Architecture’: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?” p.331.

<sup>838</sup> Kuhn, “‘Liao Architecture’: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?” p.347.

<sup>839</sup> Zhang Yuhuan, *Chinese Buddhist Architecture*. p.26. and Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas*. p.144.

<sup>840</sup> See: Kuhn, “‘Liao Architecture’: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?”

Liao pagodas, it does not necessarily follow that they would share any of the other features of a typical Liao pagoda. It is important to note that the pagodas that comprised the Liao archetypal pagoda style shared not just an octagonal ground plan, but also a wide range of features recorded by the HEAP Database. No surviving pagodas in Shaanxi, Jiangsu or Zhejiang meet all of the criteria for an archetypal Liao pagoda.<sup>841</sup> The closest of these, however, may be the Qixiasi pagoda that we explored earlier in this chapter as a potential precursor to Liao pagodas suggested by Liu Dunzhen.

Despite being made of stone, the Qixiasi Pagoda built under the Southern Tang does provide an early example of many of the features that would become popular during the Liao period. The extended base, additional base elements, lotus base, exterior relief architecture, dense eaves and octagonal ground plan were all uncommon features in the tenth century when the pagoda was built but would all become frequently used elements of Liao pagoda design. One of the major Liao features that the Qixiasi Pagoda is missing is imitation *dougong* brackets but, as we saw in the previous section, the Wuyue and Southern Tang were also some of the first polities to make the addition of this feature a distinct local trend. This is not the only time these polities were mentioned in the exploration of trends in individual features that occurred during the Liao dynasty: both octagonal designs and dense eaves seem to be able to trace some of their early popularity back to this region and period. Despite this, it still seems difficult to reconcile the similarities in pagoda design between these polities with their disparate geographical locations. This is definitely a research direction that could benefit from further exploration.

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<sup>841</sup> Liu Dunzhen, *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*. p.227.

The final suggestion about the origin of Liao pagoda designs lies in the east of the lands claimed by the Liao. Although both Kuhn and Steinhardt identified this connection as one in need of further research, in the section on octagonal designs earlier in this chapter, any links to either Balhae or Silla pagodas seemed unlikely.<sup>842</sup> Comparisons with Balhae pagodas will always be limited by the fact that we only have the one surviving Balhae pagoda but there are twenty-five Silla pagodas in the HEAP Database that can be used for comparison. Like the Liao, Silla pagodas display a strong degree of homogeneity. The ‘similarity index’ table that we observed at the beginning of this chapter (Fig. 3.1) suggested that Silla pagodas demonstrate a greater degree of homogeneity than those of almost any other polity in the HEAP Database.<sup>843</sup> The archetypal Silla design, however, is almost the opposite of that produced by the Liao. Silla pagodas typically used stone as their primary construction material, had a square ground plan, three eaves and an average height of just eight metres. They also lack many of the individual features typical of Liao pagodas such as imitation *dougong* brackets and dense eaves. The idea that Liao pagoda designs may have been influenced from the east, therefore, remains the least plausible of all of these options.

While the HEAP Database cannot answer the specific question of which dynasty or polity may have had the most impact on Liao pagoda designs, it can be used to see which polities had the greatest *potential* for influencing Liao pagodas based on the recorded data. Potential influence is established based on both the date and proximity of pagodas sharing the same feature.<sup>844</sup> Fig. 3.79 shows a summary table of which polities may have potentially influenced the Liao based on the parameters of this analysis. As anticipated, it is the Tang that emerge as

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<sup>842</sup> See: Kuhn, “‘Liao Architecture’: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?” p.348. and Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. p.370.

<sup>843</sup> Silla pagodas are only bettered in the ‘similarity index’ by Heian examples.

<sup>844</sup> For a full explanation of how the influences table works, please see chapter 2.

providing the model for the greatest number of Liao pagoda designs, with other potential influences from the Sui, Silla, Balhae and Heian.

There are a total of nine Tang pagodas that provide the closest earlier example of features that appear in twenty-three Liao pagodas. Across these twenty-three Liao pagoda sites, eighty-eight individual features had the potential to have been influenced by these earlier Tang examples. These include the closest earlier examples of almost every feature considered to be typical of not only the archetypal Liao pagoda style but of every other style identified in the typology of Liao pagodas earlier in this chapter as well. Although the Tang may not have been the first to produce all of these features, this analysis suggests that the adoption of each of them by the Liao was most likely a result of exposure to closer and more recent Tang examples.

Of the other polities featured in Fig. 3.79, there remain questions as to their actual influence that may not have been identified by this form of analysis. Almost all of these potential influences come with an extensive set of caveats. For example, the influence of the Heian according to this form of analysis is limited to just the adoption of wood as the primary construction material for the Yingxian Timber Pagoda. The historical record demonstrates that closer timber pagodas would have existed to territories claimed by the Liao but unfortunately these have not survived.<sup>845</sup> Equally, all of the potential influences listed as coming from either Balhae or Silla (thirteen eaves, extended base, additional base elements and dense eaves) would have been found in the original Tang structure at the Chaoyang

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<sup>845</sup> For example, as recently as the 10<sup>th</sup> century we have record of the Song dynasty building the Kaibao pagoda at Kaifeng, see: Liu, "The 'Water Mill' and Northern Song Imperial Patronage of Art, Commerce, and Science." p.566.

North Pagoda before it was adapted by the Liao. The Sui dynasty Hongji Pagoda in Shanxi Province is attributed as the nearest earlier example of a pagoda with either a hexagonal shape or imitation *dougong* brackets, but this pagoda was heavily restored by the Song leading to the issue of what may have been altered during this restoration.

This analysis does not necessarily mean that the Tang were the sole inspiration for Liao pagoda designs, however, but it does demonstrate that all the features found in Liao pagodas can find their precedent in the corpus of extant Tang pagodas. Tang pagodas also provide the most likely geographical means by which the Liao would have been exposed to these elements of pagoda design. There remains a compelling case though, for future studies to explore the Buddhist connections between the Liao and the Wuyue given the parallel developments that occurred in pagoda design between these two polities.

### **3.3.2. Polities that may have been influenced by Liao pagoda design:**

Unfortunately, the chronological scope of the HEAP Database only extends to the thirteenth century, leaving little room for exploring the long-term impact of Liao pagoda design in the East Asian region (although, due to the method of data collection used for the HEAP Database, some pagodas from beyond the survey period have been included).<sup>846</sup> Using the same methodology as above, it is possible to chart the polities that had the potential to have been influenced by the feature-set present in the corpus of Liao pagodas (Fig. 3.80). From this table, we can see that Liao influence could be a factor in pagodas throughout the dynastic

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<sup>846</sup> For a detailed explanation of why this is the case and the collection methodology used, see Chapter 2.

period in China (and even more recently in the PRC). This is slightly misleading, however, as all of the pagodas from the Yuan or later that enter into this table were rebuilds of earlier Liao pagodas (hence their inclusion in the database).

After the pagodas from these later polities have been removed, we are left with a potential Liao influence on the Jin and Koryŏ within the survey period. The map in Fig. 3.81 provides a visualisation of the information in the ‘influence’ table in Fig. 3.80, displaying connections with all the pagodas that are listed as being influenced by a Liao ‘originating’ pagoda. As we can see, of all the pagodas that were potentially influenced by Liao pagodas according to this analysis, only the Koryŏ examples spread beyond the borders of what was previously Liao territory.

The concept of Liao influence on Koryŏ architecture is not one that has previously been explored – most likely due to the separation of these two polities into the independent national architectural timelines of China and Korea. This analysis demonstrates that, prior to the Liao, there were no pagodas in the north of the Korean peninsula to have six sides, eight sides, seven eaves, nine eaves, thirteen eaves or a lotus base. However, after each of these features appeared on Liao pagodas, they subsequently also appeared on pagodas built under the Koryŏ dynasty in this region. In Chapter 1, we explored how the Koryŏ Buddhist canon was largely based on the previous Liao Tripitaka and that monks from the Liao polity were known to have frequented this area.<sup>847</sup> It could be the case that the changes in Koryŏ pagodas were part of this wider influx of Liao Buddhist learning into the Korean peninsula.

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<sup>847</sup> It is worth referring again here to Buswell’s excellent article on the formation of the Koryŏ Tripitaka: Buswell, “Sugi’s ‘Collation Notes’ to the Koryŏ Buddhist Canon and Their Significance for Buddhist Textual Criticism.”

As for Liao influence on the Jin dynasty, this makes for an interesting case study in the adoption of pagoda designs by later dynasties. It is the Song who are normally credited with providing the precedent for Jin dynasty pagodas.<sup>848</sup> Early studies of pagodas such as those carried out by Ecke and Soper follow the narrative of the ‘sinification’ of northern dynasties by attributing Liao developments to the Tang and Jin developments to the Song.<sup>849</sup> The current Chinese language literature, however, is now split between suggestions of both the Liao and the Song being the primary influence on Jin pagodas.<sup>850</sup> The influence table for the Jin shown in Fig. 3.82 demonstrates that it was likely a combination of features from both the Liao and Song that created the designs we see in the Jin.

The pagodas of both of these polities had the potential to have influenced a large percentage of the extant Jin pagodas included in the HEAP Database. Although the numbers of both ‘originating’ and ‘influenced’ pagodas are similar for both the Liao and Song, there remains a great disparity in the overall number of individual features that the Jin could have been influenced by in each case. Of the 242 individual features identified in Jin pagodas in the influence analysis, 102 are linked to a Liao ‘originating’ pagoda. This figure is more than both the Song (55) and the Tang (36) combined, suggesting that Jin pagodas should, in theory, appear to be more similar to their predecessors in the Liao than the Song.

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<sup>848</sup> For example, see: Qiao Yun, *Chinese Historical Architecture*. p.119 and Guo Daiheng, *History of Ancient Chinese Architecture: Volume 3, the Song, Liao, Jin and Xixia*. P.1.

<sup>849</sup> Ecke, “Structural Features of the Stone Built T’ing-Pagoda: A Preliminary Study.” And Kuhn, “‘Liao Architecture’: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?”

<sup>850</sup> For the Liao, see Wang Shaozhou, *Chinese Vernacular Architecture Vol.3*. p.43, Zhang Yuhuan, *Famous Pagodas of China*. p.5. and Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*. p.46. For the Song, see: Qiao Yun, *Chinese Historical Architecture*. p.119, and Guo Daiheng, *History of Ancient Chinese Architecture: Volume 3, the Song, Liao, Jin and Xixia*. p.1.

While there are Jin pagodas, such as the White Pagoda in Liaoyang, that match the Liao archetypal style to the letter, there are also Jin pagodas, such as the Baijiayansi Pagoda, that would not readily fit in to any of the categories in our typology of Liao pagodas. The Baijiayansi Pagoda's basic features of a brick construction with eight sides, thirteen eaves, interior space and multiple stories would, however, more readily fit into a typology of Song pagodas.<sup>851</sup> This leads to the proposal that the Jin may have adapted both Liao and Song designs depending on the pagoda in question, going against the suggestion by Guo Daiheng that Jin architecture represents a blending of the Liao and Song styles.<sup>852</sup> What we appear to be witnessing instead, is that the Jin may have carried on using Liao designs in the lands previously occupied by the Liao, and Song designs in the lands previously occupied by the Song.

The map in Fig. 3.83 is a visualisation of the influence table in Fig. 3.82 and demonstrates that there was a clear north-south divide in the probable influences on Jin pagodas. This dividing line corresponds almost exactly with the Liao-Song border suggesting that the Jin did retain each polity's own pagoda types within the regions they previously occupied (the one exception that can be seen on the map is the Lingxiao Pagoda of the Song being offered as the potential influence for the nine eaves of the Jin's Yuanxiaosi Pagoda). While the methodology used for the 'influence' analysis in the HEAP Database does favour proximity as a likely factor in the potential for influence to have taken place, the stark divide along the border makes the case for this division hard to deny.

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<sup>851</sup> The Song's famous Liaodi pagoda, for example, is another pagoda that would match these basic requirements.

<sup>852</sup> Guo Daiheng, "The Liao, Song, Xi Xia, and Jin Dynasties." p.189.



### 3.3.3. The three P's: Polity/Period/Place analysis:

This divide in the design choices made in pagodas built by the Jin raises the issue of whether regional architectural traditions may have had an impact on a pagoda's feature-set. How important were 'place' and 'locality' in the design of a pagoda? While Miller has been an early proponent of the significance of regional variation in East Asian architecture, in almost all other previous scholarship on East Asian pagodas, there is a tendency to parcel pagodas together primarily based on the polity under which they were constructed rather than their local geographical context.<sup>853</sup> The premise of this very study is a perfect example as it was originally set up to explore Liao pagodas in relation to those of the other polities that existed within East Asia.

Even those texts that are organised geographically, are organised by current provincial boundaries that may bear no relation to the boundaries of previous localised traditions in historical architecture.<sup>854</sup> Equally, the chronological organisation of most Chinese architectural histories promotes the idea of a linear path that architecture within China could follow. This creates not only the problem of side-lining certain polities like the Liao as we

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<sup>853</sup> For Miller's article on local connections in Chinese architecture, see: Miller, T. "Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed: Local Style in the Architecture of Tenth-Century China." In Lorge, T. (ed.) *The Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms*, 167-222. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2011. See for example: Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History - Dual Language Edition*. Zhang Yuhuan, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Pagodas.*, Cheng Peng, *An Overview of Ancient Chinese Pagodas.*, Xu Huadang, 徐华铛, *Chinese Ancient Pagodas Styles*.

<sup>854</sup> The main example being the new series of volumes of provincial historical architecture by Qinghua University Press that began publication in 2015 but has not yet been completed at the time of writing. The series is called: *Historical Architectural Map of China* (中國古代建築地圖) and thus far the volumes for Anhui, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, Hubei, Xinjiang, Henan, Sichuan, Hunan, Shanxi, Liaoning, Hebei and Shandong have now been completed.

found in Chapter 2, but also reduces the focus on independent vernacular building traditions within what is now China. If we return, once again, to the ‘Evolution of the Types of the Buddhist Pagoda’ by Liang Sicheng (Fig. 2.3), we see that while both the date and dynasty are taken into consideration, the location within China of each pagoda is not. This is why a pagoda in Jiangsu can be seen as the direct precursor to one in Beijing almost one-thousand kilometres away.<sup>855</sup>

To gain a sense of whether there were separate localised trends in pagoda design across the East Asian region, we can use the ‘spread by similarity’ tool within the HEAP Database. Rather than comparing individual features of pagoda design, this tool draws connections between pagodas based on the overall number of features that they share. Fig. 3.84 shows the connections between pagodas with a minimum of nine shared features. The map is a complex web of both long and short distance connections, demonstrating that there clearly are pagodas that share a similar feature set despite the distance between them. However, when we zoom in on individual parts of this map, we can see that the number of these connections that are being drawn locally outweigh those that appear over a longer distance (see inset of the area around Shanghai). The fact that a pagoda is just as (if not more) likely to find commonality among the nearest few dozen examples rather than the few hundred that exist in the database as a whole suggests that locality could be an important factor in pagoda design.

If a ‘medium distance filter’ is applied to the map in Fig. 3.84 to reduce the impact of long-distance connections, we get the image in Fig. 3.85.<sup>856</sup> The areas that have more than ten

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<sup>855</sup> As in the case of the Qixiasi Pagoda inspiring the Tianningsi Pagoda that we covered earlier in this chapter.

<sup>856</sup> For a full explanation of how these distance filters are applied see the section on the ‘spread by similarity’ function in Chapter 2.

pagodas connected to each other after this filter has been applied have been marked in red.

What is immediately apparent is that there are some distinct local groups of pagodas that begin to emerge from this image that share a similar feature-set. These local groups do not all follow the borders of previous dynasties and polities, nor are they neatly bound by current provincial limits. Instead, what we see here are the potential locations of a series of architectural localised architectural trends in pagoda design that may have transcended the polities they were constructed by.

To test the importance of locality to pagoda design further, we can compare the ‘similarity index’ scores for pagodas constructed within a ‘local area’, to the ‘similarity index’ scores for the polity and period each pagoda was produced in. The table in Fig. 3.86 displays the results of the ‘similarity index’ analysis across the whole HEAP Database. The results demonstrate that any given pagoda in the database is more likely to share a greater degree of similarity with nearby pagodas than pagodas constructed by the same polity or in the same period. Pagodas built within two-hundred kilometres of each other share an average of 10.38 out of a possible 15 features. This is compared to an average of 9.9 for pagodas built by the same polity and 8.78 for pagodas built in the same period. In total, fifty-seven percent of all the pagodas in the database share more in common with pagodas built nearby than they do with pagodas built in the same polity or period. This suggests that the location of a pagoda is not only a factor in its design but is actually the most important variable in deciding which features that pagoda is likely to have.

What is even more remarkable is that changing the parameters of the analysis to increase the radius of what is considered ‘local’ does not change this result. A ‘local area’ radius of three-

hundred kilometres only reduces the ‘similarity index’ to an average of 10.09 and still leaves fifty percent of all pagodas being more similar to those in their local area than they are to those produced in the same polity or period. Equally, reducing the requirement for a pagoda to qualify as being built within the same period only does not change the result. Pagodas built within twenty-five years of each other still only reach an average ‘similarity index’ of just 9.1. This remains less than pagodas built either by the same polity or within the same local area. This relative lack of importance for the period of a pagodas construction with regard to its features could potentially be explained by the pagodas with unconfirmed dates or major later restorations that appear within the HEAP Database. Even when these variables are removed, however, the average similarity index score for pagodas built within the same period changes by less than one percent.

It also remains a possibility that the results of the ‘similarity index’ analysis may have been affected by the HEAP Database combining pagodas found in four separate East Asian nations. After all, the organisation of pagodas into timelines has always previously been carried out based on national rather than trans-national architectural histories. A ‘similarity index’ for only pagodas produced in China does reduce the average score for pagodas built in the same ‘local area’ to 10.15. However, the scores for both similarity within polities and periods reduces as well. This means that there is a likelihood of fifty-eight percent that pagodas built in China will be more similar to other pagodas in their local area than they are to pagodas built in the same polity or period. The only country where locality does not take precedent is amongst pagodas built in Japan. This is because the majority of the pagodas constructed in Japan during the period covered by the HEAP Database fall within two-hundred kilometres of each other and therefore form part of a single ‘local area’ according to this analysis.

This is not to say that polity and period were not important to pagoda design, however. If we return to Fig. 3.86, we can see that the average ‘similarity index’ score for pagodas built in the same locality increases to 10.94 if the pagoda was also built in the same period and 11.12 if the pagoda was also built by the same polity. As we might expect, pagodas that combine being built in the same local area, with being built by both the same polity and during the same period have the highest average ‘similarity index’, with a score of 11.16. However, it remains the case that if you were trying to guess the feature-set of any given pagoda, it would be best to look at nearby examples first before taking polity or period into consideration.

If localised trends are so important to the design of pagodas, then perhaps the question we should be asking is: did the Liao have any impact on the pagoda architecture within the area under their jurisdiction? Returning to Fig. 3.85, the largest geographical grouping of similar pagodas appears in the north and north east of the East Asia region. This area corresponds almost exactly to the area covered by Liao pagoda construction. As no polity prior to the Liao had claimed jurisdiction over this entire area, it seems a reasonable hypothesis that Liao pagodas must have played a major role in the creation of this local tradition in pagoda architecture.

This potential localised Liao tradition is likely the consequence of a combination of the issues that have been discussed already in this chapter. Firstly, we know that the Liao produced pagodas with a greater degree of homogeneity than almost any other polity within the HEAP Database. Through the creation of a small group of distinct styles (that were identified in the new typology of Liao pagodas), and particularly through the emergence and repeated use of

the ‘Liao Archetypal Style’, the Liao created a unique new type of pagoda that came to dominate regions where previous pagoda construction had been limited. As we witnessed in section 3.2, many of the individual features the Liao introduced to the region were carried on by later polities and some may have even begun to spread beyond Liao borders.

The choice by the Jin to continue using Liao designs in the north of their empire is further evidence of the impact that Liao pagodas had on the area in which they were constructed. There is also evidence that Liao designs continued to be used beyond the chronological range of the HEAP Database. The Cishousi Pagoda in Beijing, built in 1576, is almost an exact replica of the Tianningsi Pagoda built in the same city some five centuries earlier. Equally, the Banchangyu Pagoda in Hebei, also built by the Ming in 1614, meets all of the requirements of the ‘Liao Archetypal Style’ bar the number of eaves. On top of this, the HEAP Database contains multiple examples of Liao pagodas that were later destroyed but were then rebuilt in the Liao style rather than adopting a new design.<sup>857</sup>

It has previously been argued that Liao architecture did not have an impact on Chinese architecture as a whole and that it was the Song who progressed the national development in pagoda architecture.<sup>858</sup> It may prove to be the case that, when taken as an average, later pagodas across the whole of what is now China share more common design elements with Song pagodas than those produced under the Liao.<sup>859</sup> What this does not take into account, however, is the importance of the ‘local’ and the impact that the Liao had at this level.

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<sup>857</sup> Examples of this phenomenon include: the Miaoyingsi White Pagoda (Yuan), the Tiangongsì Pagoda (PRC), the Shengtayuan Pagoda (Qing) and the Chanfangsi Pagoda (PRC).

<sup>858</sup> Sickman and Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China*., Kuhn, “‘Liao Architecture’: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?”

<sup>859</sup> This is not something I can test with the HEAP Database due to chronological limitations.

## **Conclusion:**

The image of the Liao polity that was introduced in Chapter 1 of this study was one of a peripheral player in a far greater Chinese historical narrative. Within this framework, the Liao were cast as the ‘other’, a minor character (or even a villain) juxtaposed against a Song protagonist. This is an account that has affected not just studies of the history of the Liao, but also the architecture produced under this polity as well. While the tone of the debate has shifted over time from one of ‘sinicisation’ to discussions involving concepts of ‘hybridisation’ and even ‘Kitanisation’, the premise of pitting the Liao against a ‘Chinese’ model remains the same. In the specific case of pagodas, the surviving Liao examples have been subsumed within a wider typology of Chinese pagoda designs and are consistently scrutinised for evidence of ‘Chinese’ influence.

The HEAP Database was created in an attempt to break this cycle and has, arguably, proved to be a practical tool in achieving this end. When we piece together the results from the exploration of previous statements made about Liao pagodas in Chapter 3, we can begin to build a picture with the Liao at its centre. In doing so, we uncover the image of a political power with direct agency over the religious architecture that was being built in the areas under its jurisdiction. We also find a polity that was capable of producing innovative designs that would have significant impact in the Northeast Asian region for centuries to come.

One of the key discoveries here, is the identification of the archetypal Liao pagoda style. There are twenty pagodas in the HEAP Database that match all fifteen features for the Liao archetypal style, a feat that no other pagoda design in the database manages to achieve. Given the level of investment these structures would require, this unprecedented level of

standardisation - involving a design that only appears within the Liao territory - has to be seen as an indication that pagodas were at the forefront of a deliberate imperial programme of Buddhist patronage.<sup>860</sup> Repeated designs may have been aimed at reinforcing a specific image of the dynasty in the eyes of those that viewed these monuments.

Even if not all of the pagodas built in this style were the result of direct imperial investment, the impact of pagodas that benefited from imperial patronage such as the Daming Pagoda in the central capital must have been key to the adoption of this design within the Liao polity. The subsequent use of the Liao archetypal style by later polities in Northeast Asia stands as a testament to the impact this design must have had in the region and are a visual reminder of the cultural legacy of the Liao polity.

Of the eight pagoda styles identified in the typology of Liao pagodas set out in the previous chapter, three do not appear anywhere else in the HEAP Database prior to the first Liao examples: the 'Liao archetypal style', the 'flower style' and the 'stupa finial style'. Each of the other five types of Liao pagoda identified also have no earlier extant examples within the districts that fell under Liao jurisdiction. The only exception to this is the 'square style', due to the previous Tang structure at the site of the Chaoyang North Pagoda - and even this was modified to include relief sculpture that we do not see in any of the similar extant Tang examples. Once again, this differentiation from what came before could be indicative of a potential Liao imperial identity being expressed through these buildings.

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<sup>860</sup> It should be noted that three of these twenty pagodas were built by the Jin, but within the area covered by the former Liao polity.



Although the majority of Liao pagoda styles represented some level of originality, the frequently expressed suggestion that they are based primarily on Tang archetypes is broadly supported by the evidence from the HEAP Database. As well as the importance of the Chaoyang North site, Tang precedents for Liao pagodas can be found for every single feature covered in the database. With the Tang being a dominant political force in East Asia throughout much of the preceding three centuries, as well as producing more pagodas than any other polity prior to the Liao period, this result is what we might have anticipated. It should be noted, however, that Tang archetypes appear to have been equally important to the other polities that began in the tenth century, with ‘influence’ analysis suggesting that the majority of features found in Song dynasty pagodas also had their nearest precedent in Tang dynasty examples.

The polity with the second highest potential influence over Song designs is identified as the Kingdom of Wuyue. This is of interest because the Wuyue pagodas, as well as those of their neighbours the Southern Tang, also represent a possible precedent for Liao pagodas in features such as an octagonal design, and imitation *dougong* brackets. It must be acknowledged that the HEAP Database’s preference for proximity when calculating ‘influence’ could have resulted in the impact of Wuyue and Southern Tang pagoda design on the Liao being reduced. The importance of this region (around present day Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang) in East Asian pagoda design, and Buddhist networks more generally, should therefore be earmarked as a potentially fruitful avenue for future research.

Previous suggestions of influence on Liao pagodas from Balhae and the Korean peninsula are not supported by what we see in the HEAP Database. While the surviving evidence for Balhae pagodas is limited, neither the one surviving example nor the foundations excavated

at other sites assimilate well into the corpus of extant Liao designs. Equally, there is a large disparity in pagoda design between Liao examples and those produced in the Korean peninsula. While this difference may be partly explained by the HEAP Database only focussing on extant pagodas, it may also partly be a product of the contrasting materials used in pagoda construction between these two regions, with the brick used at Liao pagoda sites necessitating a different design language to the granite used in earlier Silla examples.

The separation between the features of Silla pagodas and those of the Liao is indicative of a wider trend found within the HEAP Database. It appears that separate building traditions seem to have evolved in the Korean peninsula and Japanese archipelago to those witnessed in the East Asian mainland. Given the strong Buddhist connections between these regions identified in Chapter 1, these differences are, at least in part, likely to be a result of the different choices for construction materials used in these areas. Timber pagodas would therefore be a practical point of comparison between all three areas were it not for the poor preservation of these monuments in what is China as well as both North and South Korea.

While both the Liao and the Song adopted a tradition of brick pagoda construction based on Tang archetypes, they also both produced pagodas that were significantly differentiated from each other. It is the way in which the different Tang features and structural elements were combined that allowed for this difference to occur. This is similar to the situation that Steinhardt has previously noted in the ceilings of Liao timber halls, suggesting that although they are unique from anything that came before, every individual component in their construction can be found in earlier structures.<sup>861</sup> Despite the parallel developments in the Song and Liao, the framing of both dynasties within Chinese architectural histories has

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<sup>861</sup> Steinhardt, "Chinese Architectural History in the Twenty-First Century." p.44.

suggested that Liao pagodas represent a continuation of Tang norms, whereas the Song developed and refined these previous archetypes into something new.

While direct comparison with the Song was a subject that this study hoped to move beyond, the significant rise in the average height of pagodas in the Liao period is difficult to view outside the framework of the rivalry between these two polities. Not only is the average pagoda height in the Liao period almost one and a half times that of pre-Liao averages, this increase can be demonstrated to have been caused specifically by the height of Liao and Song construction. The tallest pagoda in the HEAP Database was built by the Song overlooking the Liao border, and the second tallest was built by the Liao and seemingly deliberately placed within the eyeline of Song embassies traveling to the Liao central capital. It is probably no coincidence that this pagoda also perfectly matches the Liao archetypal style, projecting an image at a massive scale that would be repeated throughout the five Liao administrative circuits.

One of the common arguments directed against the concept of pagoda design forming part of a distinct Liao imperial identity, is the assertion that the pre-dynastic Kitan people did not have a tradition of permanent architecture and therefore lacked the requisite knowledge to be involved in construction.<sup>862</sup> While it may be true that the Kitan (or the Liao elite more generally) lacked this specific knowledge, there is little to suggest that this situation would have been different in other polities and periods. To bring in an example from an entirely different context: while there is no evidence that Ramses II of Egypt had any expert knowledge in architectural design, few would argue that the temples at Abu Simbel or the

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<sup>862</sup> For example, see: Sickman and Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China*. p.269., Kuhn, “‘Liao Architecture’: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions?” p.333.

Hypostyle Hall in Karnak are not deliberate physical manifestations of his political and religious power.

Another consideration here, is that the first Liao pagodas with a confirmed date of construction in the HEAP Database appear a full century after the start of the dynasty. With the first urban developments within the Liao polity occurring from the beginning of the tenth century, there would have been multiple generations of elite level engagement with architecture, regardless of ethnicity, by the time the archetypal Liao pagoda style came to be realised. There is little reason then, to suggest that pagoda design could not have been part of an imperial programme projecting a Liao dynastic identity across East Asia.

The way in which the dates of Liao pagoda construction coincide with the increased funding that would have been available after the Treaty of Chanyuan is further suggestion of the imperial involvement in this project, as well as a rebuttal of the long-held idea that the majority of the Song tribute always found its way back south of the border.<sup>863</sup> While the original Buddhist function of pagodas cannot be denied, the way in which these buildings appear in a Liao context suggests that they must also be viewed as political objects in future studies.

If pagodas represented a grand vision of the Liao polity, then it is worth questioning what impact that vision may have had on their contemporaries and successors in the East Asian region. All of the individual structural features that gained popularity in the Liao period

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<sup>863</sup> This argument is often made as justification for why the Song accepted making these payments, see: Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China: Sung's Foreign Relations with Kitan Liao*. p.97, Twitchett and Franke, *Cambridge Hist. China, Vol. 6 Alien Regimes Bord. States, 907-1368*. p.116. and Yoshinobu Shiba, "Sung Foreign Trade: Its Scope and Organization," in *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbours, 10th-14th Centuries*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 89–115. p.98.

continued to be used long after the dynasty had ended. Of particular note here is that certain elements of Liao pagoda design carried through into Koryŏ pagodas and appear in the Korean peninsula for the first time. This is not the first time that Liao influence in the architecture of Koryŏ has been identified, with Kim Tonguk suggesting that certain elements of the Liao timber frame in Buddhist halls may have provided a precedent for similar developments in Koryŏ.<sup>864</sup> Despite this, Liao impact on Koryŏ architecture is a topic that is yet to receive extensive research due to the separation of East Asian architecture into different national canons. On the evidence presented here, however, this is an area that warrants further research.

Perhaps the most interesting case study for Liao impact in pagoda design comes in the form of the Jin dynasty. While Liao and Song influence on Jin pagodas were identified in equal measure, the overall impact of both polities appears to be regionally bound. Jin pagodas follow in the tradition of Liao archetypes in the north (in many cases following all fifteen features of the Liao archetypal style) and Song archetypes in the south. While this demonstrated the potential impact of both dynasties on the architecture of future polities, it also highlighted the localisation of traditions in pagoda designs. Analysis of the HEAP Database has shown that the regional variation in Jin pagodas is symptomatic of the separate vernaculars that had already been established in pagoda construction prior to the Jin period. Most interestingly of all, the evidence generated from the HEAP Database suggests that the locality may actually be one of the most important factors in deciding a pagoda's design, trumping both the polity and period in which it was produced.

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<sup>864</sup> Kim, Tonguk, "Foreign Contacts in Wood Architecture during the Koryŏ Period (고려 시대의木造建築의대외교섭)," in *Foreign Exchange in Korean Art (高麗美術의對外交渉)*, ed. Eunsun Park (Seoul: Yegyŏng, 2004), 249–86. pp.270-1.

This is one of the reasons why the Liao polity can be seen to have made such a significant contribution to East Asian pagoda architecture: the lack of an established tradition in pagoda construction in much of the Liao polity allowed the dynasty to be the originators of their own local tradition. The wish to form a Buddhist imperial identity, along with the centralised control and funding that had become available to the Liao in the eleventh century allowed for the development of a building tradition that can be demonstrated to have lasted for centuries after the dynasties end. Regardless of their position in the canon of Chinese architecture, the position of Liao pagodas in the canon of Northeast Asian architecture is now firmly established.

Separating the Liao from the narrative of Chinese architectural history using the HEAP Database has not only helped to establish a place for the Liao within a wider East Asian framework, but it has also highlighted some of the other limitations to chronologically organised national histories of architecture in this region more generally. The PRC claims to cover an area of over 9.5 million square kilometres. It is inevitable that a country of this scale would have multiple regional traditions in architecture established over the course of its history. While provincial histories of architecture are becoming more common, there remains no guarantee that the localised architectural traditions of the past would follow the jurisdictional boundaries of the present.<sup>865</sup>

The macro scale of the HEAP Database, however, allows us to explore and identify where these potential local trends may have occurred. Rather than thinking about architectural histories in terms of periods and polities, perhaps it is a sense of place that should provide the

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<sup>865</sup> Of particular note in this field is a (yet to be completed) series of provincial architectural records being published by Qinghua University Press entitled *Historical Architectural Map of China* that started in 2015 with the publication of: 王南 Wang Nan and 孙广懿 Sun Guangyi, eds., *Historical Architectural Map of Anhui*, 安徽古建筑地图 (Beijing: Qinhua University Press 清華大學出版社, 2015).

foundation for future work. While the HEAP Database has already proved to be a valuable tool in this regard, it is hoped that in future the included list of features can be increased to provide a more comprehensive impression of pagoda design. There would also be value in expanding the scope of the database both chronologically and geographically. Moving beyond the thirteenth century would allow for the long-term impact of the Liao and other polities to be assessed more clearly. Equally, the identification of the pagoda at Kherlan Bars in Mongolia as being a product of the Liao polity suggests that the current regional limits of the database are also a limiting factor.<sup>866</sup> Although there are many ways in which the HEAP Database can still be developed, the case study of the Liao has already demonstrated its practical applications. The value of the database goes beyond this one polity, however, and it is hoped that in future it may provide the foundations for further studies of pagoda architecture in the East Asian region.

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<sup>866</sup> Other logical areas of expansion include (but are by no means limited to): Central Asia, India and Southeast Asia.

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